FATHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PAID WORK, CARE, AND DOMESTIC LABOUR

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Summary

This thesis examines fathers' experiences of paid work, care and domestic labour. It is theoretically guided by the ethics of care and sociological debates over structure and agency. The key areas explored are: the types of employment practices that men adopt which take account of fathering and how fathers negotiate domestic labour and childcare.

Semi-structured interviews with twenty-four fathers from two public and private sector employers, explored these issues. These gathered men's accounts of their fathering practices. In addition, five key actor interviews were conducted with representatives from organisations with policy interests in this area.

It was found that fathers' employment practices were organisationally patterned. For instance, managerial fathers internalised employers' demands. Fathers in public sector roles accessed flexitime, but its use was restricted by continuous service provision. Fathers without access to formal flexible working policies made informal and occasional arrangements. It emerged that fathers' involvement in care changed in response to children's development. Playing and routine caregiving were important forms of engagement for fathers of younger children. In contrast, fathers of adolescents facilitated their independence whilst providing guidance and helping with homework. In relation to fathers' involvement in domestic labour a diverse typology was presented. This ranged from fathers who left routine tasks to partners, to 'sharers' and lone fathers with responsibility for domestic routines. Fathers' felt that partners' standards could obstruct their participation, but this was related to the ownership of tasks.

In terms of policy implications, current, voluntaristic, provisions are critiqued. Fathers' care could be fostered through a gendered policy awareness, with arrangements moving beyond children's early years. Domestic labour could be given weight as an area of policy intervention.

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1.
Introduction

Fathers' Experiences of Paid Work, Care and Domestic Labour as a Contemporary Social Issue

Work/life balance has become an issue of crucial importance in the UK. So much so that it has rightly been claimed that is it almost impossible to read a newspaper or listen to the radio without coming across some news concerning the relationship between time and work (Rubery et. al. 2005). The vast changes in employment and in society over the last decade have led to increasing political and academic attention on the interactions between employment and family life (Bond et. al. 2002:1-2). There is an ever-growing recognition that paid work can be family-unfriendly. The standard working hours of nine 'til five clash with school and nursery times, and work for women and men, particularly, can be organised on an unsocial 'shift' basis. For women, childrearing and employment are increasingly combined. The dominant source of the increase in women's economic participation rates are from mothers returning to work after progressively shorter intervals of childcare (Dex and Joshi 1999:641). Despite these changes, the market and public policies have lagged behind, since support is not offered for families for their non-market obligations (Heath et. al. 1998). For businesses, there is a need to become increasingly efficient in the face of globalisation and increased competition, whilst families have been under various pressures including rates of marital breakdown, widening income inequalities, the need for dual-incomes, and growing care responsibilities (Dex and Smith 2002:1). Given this backdrop, it remains to be seen what types of employment practices that men adopt to take account of fathering.

We are at the brink of an explosion of research, policy and media interests in fathers in the United Kingdom, although the dominant concern is with the consequences of fatherlessness for children. Despite these concerns there is a serious lack of co-ordinated policy or research interest in fathers. Where fatherhood has been of interest to policy-makers and researchers, an economic perspective has been prevalent. Although thorough study and debates have begun, there is considerable confusion concerning the role that men play in families (Clarke and Roberts 2002:178). One recent study highlighted the confusion that men experience over their fathering roles:

> ... fathers are expected to engage in a greater multiplicity of roles than ever before. However, there seemed to be less agreement on the precise roles that fathers fulfil in practice or whether, indeed, they should be doing so.
>
> Hauari and Hollingworth (2009:28)

Fatherhood is often featured in the mass media, particularly in news stories, but these accounts often single out certain groups of fathers as 'strange', as they are perceived in one way or another to differ from the norm. This may include unusually young fathers in the 'teen father' stereotype or the older than average father. Divorced fathers and 'absent' fathers have been presented as a social problem, as are 'toxic' fathers in relation to child abuse (Lupton and Barclay 1997:78-80). Fathers' rights groups have emerged that contest the relationship between fatherhood and law, as they reject a breadwinner model of fatherhood arguing for paternal responsibility to be recognised with greater contact and residency rights (Collier and Sheldon 2008:211). These groups seek a 'redefinition' of fathers as emotionally involved nurturers (Gavanas, 2002). Against this backdrop, this thesis contributes to the debates above by exploring how employed fathers negotiate childcare.

Some social science theoretical treatments of families and households have emphasised the growing fluidity of the domestic sphere (Sullivan, 2004) and that we cannot straightforwardly assume that household chores are necessarily 'women's work':

> With a bit of exaggeration one can say 'anything goes'. Who does the dishes, and when, who changes the nappies, does the shopping and pushes the vacuum cleaner is becoming just as unclear as who brings home the bacon...
>
> Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995:34, 37).

Others have expressed scepticism over popular, media, and social scientific accounts of men's greater participation in housework or the 'domesticated New Man' as avoiding or downplaying inequalities both in terms of description and explanation (McMahon, 1999):

> These people think that Cif is still called Jif; they don't know where the iron is kept; and as for limescale... they've never really grasped that concept at all. They think that it's some sort of system for measuring the acidity of citrus fruits. For shorthand purposes, let's call these people "men"... Men are still not doing their share of housework. All the evidence supports this, and my own experience tells me that the men most particularly culpable are... well, let me urge Guardian-reading women to look across the breakfast table right now.
>
> (The Guardian 22.11.2008)

Far from 'anything goes' in the home, a recent analysis found that married women's responsibility for routine housework lowers their wages. A one hour increase in housework per week reduces married women's wages by 0.16%[1] (Bryan and Sanz, 2008). The divergent perspectives on partnered men's contribution to domestic work point to the fruitfulness of researching how fathers negotiate household work.

[1] The corresponding figure for married males is a 0.14% reduction in wages for every weekly hour increase in housework. Bryan and Sanz's (2008) figures are based on a secondary analysis of the *British Household Panel Survey* (1992-2004). Their analysis was restricted to full-time employees of working age of 2191 women (1585 were married) and 2574 men (1903 married). As the BHPS does not include information on the type of timing of housework carried out by respondents, their analysis was supplemented with data from the *UK Time Use Survey 2000*. The findings of the secondary analysis of data are not drawn upon here.

The Research Problem

The previous discussion has highlighted the salience of fathers' experiences of paid employment, care, and domestic labour to contemporary social issues. This will be built upon by introducing the three research questions to the reader, although a fuller treatment of the research questions can be found in chapter four. The research questions should be thought of as three strands that run through the thesis. The first strand that the research will address is the types of employment practices that men utilise which take account (or not) of fathering. This will explore whether or not fathers make use of available flexible working arrangements, and will make comparisons between fathers who work are able to work flexibly and those who are unable to do so. The approach of the research here will be to situate fathers in their wider organisational contexts and the ways in which they enable and constrain fathers' ability to negotiate flexibility over their working hours. The second research question addresses how fathers negotiate domestic labour. The household tasks that fathers perform will be examined, as well as how they feel that this relates to the tasks that their partners undertake. This will provide data on how fathers negotiate their participation in domestic labour with their partners and the ways in which they contribute to domestic labour is constrained and facilitated. The final strand in this research addresses how fathers negotiate their responsibilities for childcare. This includes how fathers engage with care and their feelings about childcare. A further focus of this research question is how fathers negotiate their role in care as children's developmental needs change.

Researcher Positionality

My curiosity in work/life balance emerged during winter 2002 when as a second-year sociology undergraduate in Cardiff I read Bertrand Russell's essay 'In Praise of Idleness' in preparation for a social theory seminar on paid work. I had chosen this particular reading as I found the title

amusing but also intriguing – idleness seemed such a strange activity to praise. I found Russell's writing not only to be eloquent but to question how people felt about their paid employment and how this fits in with lifecourse priorities:

> ... I was brought up on the saying: 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' Being a highly virtuous child, I believed all that I was told, and acquired a conscience which has kept me working hard down to the present moment. But although my conscience has controlled my *actions*, my *opinions* have undergone a revolution. I think that there is far too much work done in the world, that immense harm is caused by the belief that work is virtuous, and that what needs to be preached in modern industrial countries is quite different from what has always been preached.
>
> Russell (1967/1932:225)

This engaging writing made me realise that the sociology of paid work was a fascinating area and that I would like to pursue my undergraduate degree dissertation in this area. My dissertation examined women's approaches to work/life balance through a small sample of interviews with women working flexitime. My respondents spoke of the scope for control over their working day that flexitime gave them, particularly with regard to managing childcare. However, they still experienced constant worries about 'things going wrong' such as when children were ill and were unable to attend childcare or school. Respondents with children spoke about their partners' and childcare, and whilst undertaking this research I realised that I wanted to explore fathers' roles and accounts of their experiences which led me pursuing this area for my doctoral research.

My stance on father involvement in care and domestic labour is that it is desirable to help take pressure off women as they increasingly manage the triple role of paid employment, care and domestic labour. It is questionable whether it is acceptable for mothers to still 'own' the overall responsibilities for care and housework. Father involvement in these areas is of policy relevance. I view the discourse surrounding work/life balance as having the potential to be a social good for all, but that fathers need to be included in this agenda. We need to understand how fathers'

experience paid employment and what opportunities they currently have for flexibility, whether there are any barriers, and what kinds of flexibility would fathers' want? We need to understand fathers' engagement with care so that policies can address their needs.

Overview of the Thesis

Having made the case for the importance of researching fathers' work/life balance experiences, as well as introducing the research questions, and my interest in this area, we now turn to what the reader will find in this study. The next chapter provides the public policy context for this study as parents' entitlements to leave and flexible working at the time of the fieldwork is discussed. Following this there will be a discussion of the development of work/life balance policies which draws upon research literature and interviews conducted with five key informants. Overarching trends in fathers' experiences of paid work, care and domestic labour are discussed through a review of the findings of large-scale survey and time use diary research. In Chapter Three, the two 'orienting frameworks' for the study are introduced: an ethics of care approach and sociological debates on structure and agency. This leads us on to a discussion of the key concepts that will prove insightful in a qualitative study of fathers' work-family practices. This will serve to have identified the key ideas informing this study, which, naturally, leads us onto issues of how they will be researched, with which the fourth chapter concerns itself. The three guiding research questions are set out, providing a focus for the study. The issues that a qualitative research design raises are addressed. There is a discussion of the practicalities of this study which includes: the sampling strategy, research access, the use of semi-structured interviews and associated ethical concerns, interview location and procedures, data recording, transcription, data analysis and the use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software.

As these three chapters provide an understanding of the 'background' of this study, we turn to the intriguing business of research findings. For clarity, the dissemination of findings and their interpretation have been split into four chapters that address the three research questions. These chapters (chapters five, six, seven and eight) are organised in the following order: fathers' organisational contexts and flexible working practices, fathers' accounts of their working practices, fathers' and care, and fathers' and domestic labour. The research is summarised in the concluding chapter, showing how this has moved us forward in our understanding of fathers' experiences of work, care and domestic labour with reference to the research questions and the wider literature. The thesis' conceptual contribution is reflected upon and the methodological issues encountered are discussed. This is followed by a recognition of the caveats of this study along with some personal learning points gained from the research process. Finally, the thesis will close with some policy implications arising from the research findings. Now that what follows has been outlined, we will turn to reviewing the literature on fathers' employment practices, care and domestic labour.

2.
Public Policy Context and Debates on Work/life Issues

Introduction

In this chapter the public policy context is set out in terms of the policy and legislative provisions that were in place for parents during the data gathering part of the research in 2005/2006, this includes paternity leave, parental leave and the right to request flexible working. Following this there is a section on the development of family-friendly policies and the concept of work/life balance. A critical stance is taken towards this problematic concept. To help frame my research questions, five interviews were carried out, mostly before my fieldwork with fathers commenced, with key actors relevant to the area of fathers' work and care. These interviews were insightful in terms of aiding my understanding of the research area and the local policy context, and so they are included in this chapter in addition to the research literature. On the whole, the interviewees were receptive to my research and some provided me with details of other groups who would be interesting to interview and I pursued these opportunities. During these interviews I was given documents and resources produced by the organisations such as booklets, and in one case, a DVD which gave me further information on their ongoing projects and approach to policy. These interviews were carried out in the organisations' offices and lasted between an hour to an hour and a half.

As this thesis rests upon a qualitative approach – interviews with fathers – I have sought to contextualise the study by reviewing the findings of secondary analyses of large scale data sets and some time-use surveys that address the availability and take up of flexible working arrangements, fathers' engagement with care and domestic labour. Each of these three research areas is addressed in turn and the findings of the quantitative research are followed by reviews of

other studies. Having outlined this chapter, we now turn to understanding fathers' public policy entitlements.

Fathers' Legal Entitlements

This section introduces the major statutory provisions that address fathers' work/life practices, at the time of the fieldwork in 2005/2006:

- **Paternity leave.** The basic rights to paternity leave and pay are set out in the Employment Act 2002. The right to paternity leave and statutory paternity pay allow an eligible employee to take paid leave to care for his child or to support the mother after birth. Since April 2003, fathers can take either one week or two weeks consecutive paternity leave. During this time most employees[2] are entitled to statutory paternity pay.

- **Adoptive leave.** The Employment Act 2002 sets out the basic rights to adoption leave and pay. From April 2003, the rights to adoption leave and statutory adoption pay allow an eligible employee adopting a child to take time off when a child is placed with them for adoption. An eligible employee is entitled to 26 weeks ordinary adoption leave and a further 26 weeks additional adoption leave, running from the end of the ordinary adoption leave. During the ordinary adoption leave, the employee may also be entitled to Statutory Adoption Pay.

- **Parents' right to request flexible working.** Employees' rights to request flexible working is set out in the Employment Act 2002. Since April 2003, employees have the right to apply to work flexibly. Employers have a statutory duty to consider requests

[2] Employees must be classified as 'employed earners' and earn at least the 'lower earnings limit' to qualify for statutory paternity pay. The same applies for accessing statutory adoption leave pay.

seriously in accordance with the set procedure, and refused only where there is a clear business case for doing so. Where an application is refused, employees have a right to receive a written explanation as to why. Furthermore, employees can appeal against the employers' refusal. Employees are eligible to request flexible working if they have a child aged under six, or a child with a disability under 18.

- **Time off for dependents in an emergency.** The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Employment Relations Act 1999, sets out the right for time off for dependents. This came into affect during December 1999. The right to time off is available to workers who have a contract of employment with an employer, and whether they work full- or part-time hours. However, there is not entitlement to pay.

- **Parental leave entitlements** The right to parental leave was first introduced during December 1999 under the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999. From January 2002, changes to parental leave came into force under the Maternity and Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2001. This extended parental leave to parents of children who were aged under five years during December 1999, and to parents of children with disabilities under 18. In addition, parents of children who were born or placed for adoption between 15 December 1994 and 14 December 1999 are entitled to parental leave, providing that they have the qualifying service.

Family-Friendly Policies and the Turn to 'Work/life Balance'

Although this thesis is concerned with fathers' paid work, care and domestic practices, the debate surrounding work/life balance (hereafter 'WLB') is of clear relevance in informing the study. WLB has been viewed as a conceptually vague and empirically ill-defined term (Felstead

et. al. 2002). It attracts a degree of controversy (Ackers 2003:221). It has been portrayed as merely another 'fuzzy' piece of political rhetoric. Clearly, given the current social significance of WLB, this is an undesirable state of affairs. Before moving any further, we need to have a clear understanding of WLB and its implications: just what does it mean 'in practice'?

As a phrase, 'WLB' has been understood as a metaphor. 'Balance' has both subjective and objective meanings and measurements that will vary by circumstances and across individuals. It implies human agency, that we 'manage' our balance. Defining 'work' is problematic since it cannot be taken to mean paid employment alone; it also includes unpaid hours, and travel to and from work. There are further complications in instances when there is a fine line between life and work, for example in the case of people who work from home, particularly with the rise of information technology. 'Life' implies the rest of life outside of work, and there are many aspects of this, with family life, free time, leisure time, committed time (Guest, 2002:261-263). This thesis cannot claim to address all of these aspects of 'life', although Guest's wider definition is commendable, the thesis examines fathers' childcare and domestic practices.

Some concerns have been expressed that WLB is not seen in broad enough terms. Particularly in the extensive literature on the role of part-time employment, there has been a narrow focus on the balancing of work and family life (Warren, 2004). This limited conception of WLB is linked to shifting discourses. Originally, there was a focus on women's employment; employers were concerned to develop ways to retain female staff given the projected decline in school-leavers entering the labour market during the 1990s and the expected skills shortages. This recruitment-centred agenda has expanded so that men are included in a broader awareness of the wish for more flexible working arrangements amongst a downsized, highly pressurised core workforce (Dex and Scheibl 2001:412; Lewis 1997:13). The initial focus on work and family life can be

seen in the earlier discourses that were used in this area, such as 'family-friendly policies' and 'work-family reconciliation'. The shift towards WLB is seen as a recognition that that those without families may also have interests that are not necessarily compatible with long and inflexible working hours. However, in practice, in the UK context, WLB still generally concerns care and balancing paid work and caring (Perrons et. al. 2005:54-55). There are also criticisms of the ways in which the gender-neutrality of WLB discourses obscure gender differences in non-paid work demands and the need for changes to be made in workplaces to accommodate care (Lewis et. al. 2007).

Although families may take up a substantial amount of non-work time, there are also numerous other facets to non-work time and the 'life' aspect of WLB. An holistic concept of WLB is needed (Warren, 2004). It would certainly help in overcoming what is argued to be a simple binary distinction between 'work' and 'life' (Perrons et. al. 2005:60). There is a recognition that work and life are not necessarily two distinct spheres (Warhurst et. al. 2008). This questions the underlying assumption made in debates about WLB that paid work is characterised by alienation and experienced as a constraint, whereas life is equated with happiness or self-realisation (MacInnes, 2008).

To overcome what has been identified as a narrow focus on paid work and unpaid caregiving in treatments of WLB the importance of a third realm of 'recreational labour' has been asserted. Recreational labour covers activities where the primary aim is the satisfaction of individuals and their subjective needs, these would include: community activities, self-care, personal time, leisure, and enjoyment (Ransome, 2008). Others have taken issue with the lack of awareness of the community as an important context in the negotiations between work and family demands. An emphasis is placed upon the social and historical contexts in which lives are embedded (Swisher et. al. 2004:281, 283). This would appear to be a case of rethinking our priorities, as:

> If work/life balance is to actually *mean* balance, then instead of paid work being the starting point and the question being how, as a society, we are to fit our life around our paid work, we put it the other way round and ask: how do we fit our work around our life?
>
> Williams (2004:77 emphasis in original).

A multi-dimensional approach to WLB would go some way in addressing criticisms that have been made of the more 'mainstream' WLB campaigns, such as that of the Department of Trade and Industry, for being 'one dimensional'. It is argued that such 'uni-dimensionality' acts in the interests of managerial rationality and so limits a much wider and more radical approach to WLB reform (Shorthose, 2004). These points have parallels with criticisms that have been made in the North American context of WLB discourse, as merely reflecting the individualism, achievement orientation and instrumental rationality that is central to the organisation of bureaucracy and its practices (Caproni 2004:208). This line of thought critiques the idea of 'balance', particularly the implicit idea that it is possible to achieve a right balance between paid work and other parts of life. Furthermore, the shifting character of people's work and non-work involvements and their meanings across the lifecourse are overlooked (Gambles et. al. 2006:35). The treatment of 'balance' as an individual achievement negates the role of constraints. A more satisfactory approach would recognise the complex interplay of interests, expectations and opportunities, and that within this both choices and constraints exist (Warhurst et. al. 2008). This is an important recognition given that the discourse surrounding has effects in terms of limiting policy, in that it presents 'public issues as private troubles with personal solutions' (MacInnes 2008:58).

Fathers' Paid Employment Practices

Findings from large-scale surveys[3]

Secondary analysis carried out of the Workplace Employment Relations Survey 1998-2004 Panel (hereafter 'WERS') (Whitehouse et. al. 2007) found that there had been uneven growth in both the incidence and comprehensiveness of family-friendly provisions between 1998 and 2004. The largest increases occurred among workplaces with relatively few provisions in 1998. In 1998, family-friendly provisions were associated with the public sector, having management that viewed work-family balance as an organisational rather than individual employees' responsibility and the presence of comprehensive equal employment opportunity practices. However, in 2004, the first two factors were not found to be significantly associated with the number of family-friendly provisions at a workplace. The average number of family-friendly provisions per workplace increased from an average of 2.6 in 1998 to 4.3 in 2004. Paid paternity leave became the most prevalent of provisions examined in both surveys by 2004, although it was not universally available (92% of workplaces provided paid paternity leave in 2004, up from 48% in 1998).

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[3] WERS 2004 is the fifth survey in a series which provides a nationally representative dataset on employment relations and working life inside British workplaces. Previous surveys were conducted in 1980, 1984, 1990 and 1998. The survey fieldwork was conducted between February 2004 and April 2005. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with around 3,200 managers and almost 1,000 worker representatives. Over 20,000 employees completed and returned a self-completion questionnaire. This is reported by Kersley et. al. (2006) and Whitehouse et. al. conducted a secondary analysis of the 1998 and 2004 datasets.

The Third work/life Balance Employer Survey was conducted in 2007 with a random sample of 1,462 workplaces in Britain with five or more employees. Workplaces were randomly selected from the Inter-departmental Business Register. Telephone interviews were carried out with a manager at each workplace who held day-to-day responsibility for personnel and employment relations issues.

Hooker et. al. (2007) report findings from the Third work/life Balance Employee Survey. This is a cross-sectional survey carried out in 2006 of adults of working age living in Britain, who worked as employees in organisations with five or more employees. The sample was based on 2,081 interviews. The secondary analysis by Biggart and O'Brien is also based on this dataset.

The British Social Attitudes Survey provides a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. The 2005 survey split the sample into four sections which answered different versions of the questionnaires. Some questions were asked to the full sample (4, 268 respondents), or a randomly selected quarter, half or three-quarters of the sample.

Similarly the Third Work/life Balance Employer Survey (Hayward et. al. 2008) found that both availability and take-up of the six work/life balance arrangements included in the survey (part-time working, job sharing, flexitime, working a compressed hours week, working reduced hours for a limited period, and working from home on a regular basis) had increased since the second survey in 2003. However, the extent of the increase varies according to the arrangement examined. Part-time working became near universal, being available in 92% of workplaces (compared to 81% in 2003). There was a large increase in the availability of reduced hours working for a limited period – 74% of workplaces reported its availability in 2007, up from 40% in 2003. Compressed hours working has increased from 19% in 2003 to 41% in 2007. Jobsharing and flexitime both increased substantially. Jobsharing increased from 39% to 59%, and flexitime from 38% to 55%. There was a slight, although not statistically significant, increase in working from home, from 22% in 2003 to 26% in 2007. Only 4% of workplaces were found to have no flexible working arrangements available. The main reason given (71%) was that they were considered incompatible with the nature of the business.

The Third Work-life Balance Employee Survey, conducted in early 2006, found a significant increase in the availability of most flexible working arrangements since 2003. Almost all employees (90%) reported that at least one flexible working arrangement was available to them if they needed it – an increase from 85% in 2003. The working arrangements most commonly available were part-time working, reduced hours for a limited period, and flexitime. The arrangements most commonly taken up by employees were flexitime, working from home, and part-time work. The survey found a high level of informal and short-term flexible working arrangements in British workplaces, with over half the workforce (56%) reporting that they had worked flexibly in the last 12 months. Two or more flexible working arrangements were available to 77% of employees (compared with 68% in WLB2). The most commonly available

flexible working arrangement was working part-time. Nearly seven in ten (69%) of employees said that this would be available if they needed it (a small increase from 67% in WLB2). Over half of employees (54%) felt that they would be able to work reduced hours for a limited period if they needed to do so (a decline from 62% in WLB2). Flexitime was the third arrangement to be available to over half (53%) of employees (an increase from 48%) in WLB2, whilst just under half (47%) of employees felt that job sharing would be available to them if they needed it (an increase from 41% in WLB2) (Hooker et. al. 2007).

Flexitime was found to be more common in large than small workplaces (63% of employees working in workplaces of 250 or more employees as compared to 50% of those working in workplaces with five to 24 workers). The industries with the highest incidence of flexitime were banking, finance and insurance (61%) and public administration (54%). It was least common in manufacturing (46%). There were few statistically significant differences found in the take-up of flexitime between different groups. Where there were differences, the groups most likely to take-up flexitime were: women (54% as compared to 44% of men), public sector employees (54%, as compared to 46% in the private sector) and part-time workers (59%). However, a secondary analysis of the Third Work-Life Balance Employee Survey by Biggart and O'Brien (2009) found that flexitime and homeworking were the most popular flexible working arrangements amongst full-time male employees, both with and without children. Fathers made significantly greater use of both options: 33% of fathers and 28% of non-fathers had used flexitime in the last year; 28% of fathers and 21% of fathers had taken up homeworking in the same period.

The Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2004 (Kersley et. al. 2006:250-252) asked managers whether a range of flexible working arrangements were available to at least some employees (n=2,050). 70% of these workplaces gave some employers the ability to reduce

working hours, and 57% had the ability to increase working hours. The ability to change shift patterns was present in under half of workplaces (45%). Flexitime was available in 35% of employers and job-sharing in just under a third of cases (31%). Homeworking was reported to be available by 26% of managers. Term-time only working was available in a fifth of instances, and working compressed hours had the least reported availability in 16% of cases. These arrangements were found to be most common in these types of establishments: larger workplaces, those which were part of a wider organisation, larger organisations, in the public sector, and those where at least one union was recognised. The survey of employees (n=21,655) found that high proportions were not able to say whether arrangements would be available, which is a notable finding in itself. For the various flexible working arrangements, this stood at between 16% to 37% of employees who were unaware. Flexitime emerged as the arrangement that employees saw as most available in 38% of cases – this is slightly higher than indicated in the survey of managers. Employees' awareness of the availability of reduced hours (32%) was markedly lower than the managers' survey would have suggested. A similar finding emerged with regards to ability to increase hours (31%) and change shift patterns (27%). As with flexitime, employees perceived working compressed hours to be slightly more available to them (20%) than in the managers' survey. Employees' awareness of job-sharing (19%), term-time only working (14%) and homeworking (14%) also continue the pattern of being lower than the figures given by managers.

The WERS 2004 (Kersley et. al. 2006) survey of managers found that fathers most commonly took time off around the birth of their child using either paid or unpaid paternity leave (73% of workplaces). Annual leave was used by fathers in 34% of workplaces, and time off at employers' discretion in 26%. In a minority of employers, 5% of managers reported that fathers made use of other leave arrangements and 2% said no leave arrangements were available. In terms of trends,

larger workplaces were found to be more likely to provide paternity leave than smaller workplaces, which were more likely offer discretionary leave. Significant variations were found according to sector, as fathers usually took paternity leave in 91% of public sector workplaces, compared with 70% of workplaces in the private sector.

In addition to the findings of large-scale surveys into the availability and take-up of flexible working practices that WERS and the three Work-life Balance Employee and Employer Surveys provide, data on people's experiences of work/life balance are provided by the British Social Attitudes Survey (hereafter 'BSAS'). MacInnes (2005) carried out a secondary analysis of the 2002 BSAS. It was found that work/life balance issues were relevant to many respondents in paid employment, with over half of employed respondents reporting that they came home from work at least several times in a month too tired to carry out chores. Six out of ten of those currently employed also saw their job as stressful. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between respondents' family situation and perceptions of time stress at work, trends towards longer hours at work or the need to work longer hours to get promoted. Thus, MacInnes concludes that these findings provide a challenge to assumptions that work and family are mutually exclusive spheres, the data point to complementarity. Differing interpretations are made in an analysis of 1989, 1997 and 2005 BSAS questions, (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007) namely that growing pressures in paid employment are resulting in greater difficulties in combining work with family. This argument rests upon findings that in 2005, 84% of full-time employed women and 82% of full-time men would like to spend more time with their family, up from three-quarters (75%) of full-time women and 70% of full-time men in 1989.

Findings from Organisational Studies

This section examines the organisational context of fathers' work/life practices. It is crucial to examine this since organisations affect capacities for work-life articulation in respect of demands made on employees, as well as concrete work-life entitlements offered (Crompton et. al. 2007a:5). It has been noted that there is a scope for employee time autonomy over the number and scheduling of working hours where employees are contracted to complete particular tasks rather than a specified time output. In particular, there are findings that self-determination and task discretion is greatest for those in professional and managerial jobs (Fagan, 2001a). Managers tend to have no set working hours, where they may work outside standard hours if a task requires it for its successful completion (Houston and Waumsley, 2003). However, in terms of choice and constraint in organisations this is a form of 'self-imposed overtime' amongst employees (Rutherford 2001:260). This reflects the findings of a study of Scottish call centres, where men claimed to work unpaid overtime more than women. Overtime working was attributed to not wanting not to let down colleagues or customers (Hyman et. al. 2005).

As well as the demands of a specific role, devoting long hours to paid employment needs to also be situated within an understanding of organisational discourses of time, particularly the notion of commitment to a career:

> ... time, productivity and commitment are socially constructed [...] the notion that time represents money, and hence symbolizes productivity, commitment and personal value is widespread. Time is defined as a commodity to be managed and 'given' to paid work and/or family. Productivity and commitment tend to be defined in terms of hours spent at the office [...] Commitment tends to be regarded by management as finite and non-expandable, implying that if someone has commitments outside work, this inevitably reduces their level of commitment at work.
>
> Lewis (1997:16)

In seeking promotion, it has been documented how employees are subject to pressures to 'perform' in their work, notably this includes a compulsion to work longer hours (Crompton 2006:80), which leads to a culture of presenteeism. Presenteeist attitudes towards working time are mirrored in a study of employees of an American blue-chip company. Work/life balance arrangements were available but their effectiveness was limited by an unwritten organisational norm that working "more hours indicates that you are paying your dues" (Hochschild 1997:19). This culture led to a strange reversing of worlds where working became a priority, and even enjoyable, whilst time spent with family became a secondary priority with an industrialised nature, experienced as a chore (Hochschild, 1997). This echoes Perrons et. al. *'s* (2005:56-57) arguments that the long hours working culture can become an 'internalised drive' with employees working more hours than they prefer. This can ultimately generate a form of 'constrained autonomy' in employees' work/life practices.

Two of the policy interviews I conducted with the Workers' Organisation and the Work/life Balance Organisation both pointed to experiences when they have had to counter resistance from managers when piloting and implementing work/life balance arrangements and policies in employing organisations:

> ... sometimes, managers perceive flexible working practices as actually giving them more work and less control. Erm, and I think quite often, it takes them a long time to get their heads around the concept of work/life balance...
>
> Workers' Organisation Representative

> Some managers' perceptions of work/life balance is that it's a free for all and that staff can do what they want, and their business couldn't possibly run, based on that scenario.
>
> Work/life Balance Organisation Representative

Other research indicates that these findings regarding the nature of managerial working culture and the notion of career progression can be detected amongst fathers in professional occupations (Hogarth et. al. 2001; Vincent and Ball, 2006; Brannen et. al. 2004). Workers may make compromises to achieve their organisational goals and the long hours working culture underpinned by a perceived need of presenteeism become internalised:

> The main characteristics of employment among fathers... long and often irregular hours and no break in employment due to children – are the product of dominant ideologies and the structure of labour markets. These define the 'good' father and the 'good' worker in ways that sustain present patterns of male employment as compared with unpaid work in the home. Ideologies legitimate structures which in turn reinforce ideologies.
>
> Moss and Brannen (1987:41)

Research into women's career progression has long highlighted how the male norm underpinning the construction of career progression in terms of time demands and the culture of presenteeism impact upon women with caring responsibilities (Rutherford, 2001; Perrons et. al. 2007). One aspect of building recognition of material organisation constraints and the role that they play in experiences of paid employment and care will necessitate a critical examination of the contemporary construction of careers. The gendered temporal norms that underpin them will need to be revised[4]. Gender equality requires a reconfiguration of both paid and unpaid work

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4 The Workers' Organisation recognised this point and the broader role that flexible working practices could play in deconstructing the long hours working culture associated with career progression:

> ... if we made flexible working more accessible, if we cut working hours, if we made it more of a norm that men took time off to spend time with their children and took advantages, and didn't work 'til, didn't work forty-eight hour weeks sat at the office desk, erm, I think we'd find that women were able to infiltrate the higher level jobs. Because I think it's the lack of flexible working that stops women getting higher paid jobs. But it has to come down – I'm not explaining it very well. What I mean is if it became more of a norm for men to work less hours and more flexibly, it would allow more of a level playing field... And then we would find that equal pay would naturally, the levels would naturally start to close as well. Because everybody, again, it would wipe out the old presenteeism attitude. A woman can't possibly spend you know, if she wants to care for her children, can't possibly spend a forty-eight hour week sat in front of a computer. A man can do it usually because they either haven't got children, or somebody else will look after the children.
>
> Workers' Organisation Representative

between men and women (Lewis and Giullari, 2005) to which making flexible working practices a norm could contribute.

> ... the public sector are more pushed by legislation. They have to be flagships, don't they, I think. So somewhere like PCS5, for instance, which is a public sector union, they will probably tell you that their members are covered more effectively by flexible working practices, family-friendly policies, flexi-systems, job-sharing, part-time working, homeworking. They have access to all of that.
>
> Workers' Organisation Representative

Wider calls for greater employee-led flexibility have been found in other studies. The most popular change that people wanted in their working schedules was more flexibility in their organisation of work (Fagan, 2001a). Among a sample of full-time employees in the electrical and engineering sectors there was a strong desire generally to use flexible working (Houston and Waumsley 2003:23). Fathers' demands for flexi-time can be understood as having preferences for the scope to have some flexibility over the daily and weekly working hours without a loss of income (O'Brien and Shemilt 2003:63).

Current policy approaches can be characterised as being voluntaristic. Although the benefits of work/life balance to employers are promoted – the 'business case' - it is ultimately dependent upon them 'opting in' and is thus a softer approach. That the business case presents benefits for a core of highly skilled workers at the neglect of those located on the periphery is of concern (Dean, 2002). WLB would be best promoted as part of a social responsibility agenda that does not rest upon a business case as a basis for access to provisions (Dean, 2007). The social needs of families should be prioritised over the needs of businesses and the economy (Fevre, 2003). Therefore, a more satisfactory approach would involve more statutory underpinnings to strengthen the demands of families when they are seeking arrangements with employers:

5 PCS, the *Public and Commercial Services Union,* represents over 300,000 UK members from the civil service and government agencies (Public and Commercial Services Union, 2008).

> I think they could possibly do more in terms of legislation to force employers' hands maybe... That would be increasing rights for individuals to request flexible working, increasing maternity and paternity, and general access to flexible working, and I think reducing the long hours culture as well. It's never one thing in isolation, is it? There's lots of things that interact with each other, and reducing working hours I think would play a big role.
>
> Workers' Organisation Representative

Part of the success of the Norwegian paternity quota scheme which set aside four weeks of leave for fathers, was that its element of compulsion embedded the meaning that the state, not fathers, negotiated with employers for this measure (Brandth and Kvande, 2001). State intervention at this level is an improvement upon fathers informally approaching employers which rests upon securing good relations with management, which we cannot assume, is present for all fathers:

> It is difficult for people to convert their preferences into actual working-time reductions through individual negotiations with current or alternative employers. Public debate and collective action are needed to broaden the politics of time.
>
> Fagan (2002:87)

Flexible working will need greater promotion amongst male workers and to ensure that flexible working does not mean poor career prospects (Houston and Waumsley 2003:45).

Thus, employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with current working practices and preferences for alternatives partly depends upon their perceptions of the availability of feasible alternatives (Fagan, 2001b). A key constraint is that 'men's jobs' are constructed as full-time in a gender-segregated labour market (Fagan, 2002). In instances where employers have a wider range of policies, which are in theory, available to all employees, when managerial staff have been found to present them as being aimed at women with caring arrangements (Smithson and Stokoe,

2005). This shows continuities with Beechey and Perkins' (1987) findings on the gendered construction of part-time working.

The impact of organisational culture upon the implementation of work/life balance policies within individual workplaces has been found in a study of workplaces in Sheffield and Canterbury. It emerged that ensuring service provision and delivery stood in tension with providing support to staff (Yeandle et. al. 2002). In this context, the discretion of individual line managers determined to a large extent the implementation of formal work/life balance policies. Managers' discretion involved making personal judgements about how reasonable the request was and how genuine staff members' needs were (Yeandle et. al. 2003). In a study of a UK social services department it was found that flexible working arrangements were both poorly communicated and applied inconsistently. Working parents described the 'management lottery' in terms of whether they were responsive to their care needs, although the 'lottery' was also shaped by employees' status, as lower status employees had much less autonomy than higher-status employees (Brannen, 2009). A distinction can therefore, be drawn between what organisations claim to provide in the way of work/life balance arrangements, and provisions that are offered in practice (Perrons et. al. 2005:59). Where larger employers have well-developed 'family-friendly' policies it does not follow that they are implemented at a local, operational level (Dean, 2002). This distinction between organisational policies and practices draws our attention to how the application of work-family arrangements is mediated by organisational cultures.

Although workplace policies and practices are shaped by national legislation there are discrepancies between formal policies and working practices. It is important to address organisational cultures so that wider policies have a discernable and positive, everyday impact

given that policies do not straightforwardly change structures, relationships, attitudes, behaviours and experiences. This draws our attention to the value of micro-level initiatives in individual workplaces, which target their unique cultures, and are contextually sensitive (Crompton et. al. 2007b). The interview with the organisation that pilots work/life balance arrangements in organisations emphasised the need to engage with individual organisational cultures and that the process of implementing policies did not take a 'one-size fits all' approach. A specific need to engage with men to encourage their uptake of arrangements was made, particularly the need to 'make it real' to them:

> ... more women seemed to take up work/life balance options than men. Although increasingly, men are taking up the options. Often what we find is that people think that work/life balance is all about women with children. I always, personally describe three things: there's childcare, there's family-friendly, and there's work/life balance. Childcare is obvious. Family-friendly is obvious. Work/life balance is for everyone and anyone, regardless of anything! So, family-friendly is, you know if you've got a family, so that's men and women. Work/life balance is anybody and everything, because we've all got lives outside of work. So when you present it to men in that way, and they think, "oh well, you know, I could use the flexi-system" or whatever it is they want to use, "And I can go and play golf in the afternoon, or I can go and do whatever". They start to think about it differently. So it's about making it real for men. What we are finding is that men are taking more responsibility in terms of the childcare. So it's making it easier for them to be able to share childcare responsibilities with their partner.
>
> Work/life Balance Organisation Representative

There is a need to ensure on a practical level that workplace flexibility should enable boundaries between work and home to be crossed without being compromised and that boundaries that maintain power relationships are addressed (Wasoff and Cunningham-Burley, 2005).

That some fathers may opt out of demanding careers[6] in order to become more involved with caring for their children has been documented (Gerson, 1997). A recent study found a group of

[6] A similar dynamic has been posited at the other end of the occupational spectrum:

'juggling fathers' in professional careers who had made changes to their careers in order to take on greater caring responsibilities (Vincent and Ball, 2006). In terms of planning their fatherhood around career demands there are parallels with Plantin's (2007) Swedish middle class respondents who purposefully concentrated on their careers in their earlier working lives and planned to become fathers later. The ability to secure both flexibility and autonomy in working hours has been identified elsewhere as a determinant in fathers taking up a greater role in caring responsibilities (Gerson, 1997). Professional careers have been found to offer the scope to pursue family-friendly specialisms (Crompton, 2001).

Small and medium enterprises (hereafter 'SMEs') have been found to be less likely than larger organisations to devise family-friendly working as part of a package of measures. They are more likely to devise incremental and *ad hoc* arrangements as needs arise. For instance, meeting individuals' needs at times of personal crisis can motivate flexibility. However, obtaining flexibility in SMEs rests heavily upon workplace relationships and expectations (Dex and Scheibl, 2001). A recent qualitative study found that parents working for smaller employers tended to experience more informal and ad hoc approaches to flexible working (Ellison et. al. 2009). However, others have argued that an absence of formal policy on requesting flexible working can contribute to employees' reticence in asking for flexibility (Dex and Scheibl, 2002). In this context, some employees lack the confidence to make requests and even if they do, they may feel guilty (Yeandle et. al. 2003:28). In contrast, others found that having time off for domestic emergencies is a widely-held expectation amongst employees (Bond et. al. 2002:72).

> For men with limited work opportunities, the desire to nurture can be frustrated in the workplace. Blocked mobility can prompt men to look for other sources of meaning and fulfilment, and child rearing offers a rich alternative. These men look to parenting as a form of productive labor, and like the proverbial proud mother, they come to see children as their primary identity and even a source of vicarious identity.
>
> Gerson (1997:41)

However, it remains to be seen whether having time off for family responsibilities is seen as an occasional benefit rather than a right (Lewis, 1997).

In terms of fathers' use of paternity leave provisions, fathers' access and take up of leave has been found to be limited by what organisational policies permit and what are seen as acceptable practices within their organisational cultures (Dermott, 2001). Others stress the benefits that formal employer policies can have, and how employers' policies are important in fathers' behaviour in terms of determining the type and duration of leave that fathers take (Smeaton, 2006:xi). The men in Smeaton's (2006:60) research who were in large, supportive organisations, emphasised the importance of organisational policy and culture. In contrast groups of fathers have been identified who were unhappy with their paternity leave provisions, preferring longer paternity leave (Dermott, 2001). It may be that fathers' are conscious of not placing burdens on their employer in terms of productivity and costs in their taking of paternity leave (Thompson et. al. 2005) which restricts their entitlement to paternity leave.

Improved paternity leave provisions would perhaps be more successful in bringing fathers into the home to provide care but this may only be if income replacement levels are widely regarded as fathers as sufficient:

> ... there's a financial disincentive there from the wage's point of view, I know a lot of men who've just taken the week off and that's it, because they just can't afford to take the rest of it.
>
> Fathering Columnist

> You know, having a baby is probably one of the most expensive episodes in anybody's life, and yet the level of paternity pay is considerably less than they would have been earning had they been at work. So we're asking people at a time in their life when they've got lots of outgoings to suddenly take a drop in their wages, so people don't take it up.
>
> Fatherhood Organisation Representative

There have been calls for parental leave arrangements to be located within a 'total policy package' whereby a broader approach is taken to the use of time throughout the lifecourse (Deven and Moss, 2002). There is a recognition that policy measures that increasingly absent parents from the home through the adult worker model, where the route to social inclusion is through paid work, stand in tension with other policy goals which expand parental roles in the home through a school-parent partnership (Shucksmith et. al. 2005). However, other research indicates the issue of fathers' caring needs throughout childhood is not straightforward, as when fathers' reduction of their working hours, is a temporary measure restricted to the first year of children's lives (Dermott 2008:33).

Fathers' Negotiations over Domestic Labour

Time Use Trends in Domestic Labour[7]

Researching longer-term trends in the gendered division of domestic labour is necessarily political since identification and interpretation of developments depends upon how much change

[7] Bond and Sales (2001) utilise data from the 1994 British Household Panel Survey. This is a longitudinal annual survey of each adult member from a nationally representative sample of over 5,000 households. A subsample of 981 dual earner couples of working age was used for the secondary analysis (Bond and Sales, 2001).

1994 International Social Survey Programme Data are analysed in Geist (2005). Geist restricted her analysis to ten countries: Australia, Austria, Canada, Britain, Italy, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden and the US. The secondary analysis was restricted to married and cohabiting couples aged between 25-64 working either full- or part-time, or have spouses who do so ($n = 4799$). Crompton et. al. (2005) carried out a secondary analysis of 1994 and 2002 ISSP data for Britain, the Czech Republic and Norway. The 1994 data consists of the following numbers of respondents: 538 (Britain), 621 (Czech Republic), and 1264 (Norway). Data collected in 2002 are based on these sample sizes: 916 (Britain), 735 (Czech Republic), and 947 (Norway).

Crompton and Lyonnette (2008) utilise combined datasets from the 2002 and 2006 British Social Attitudes Surveys.

Baxter (2002) is based on a secondary analysis of nationally representative survey data collected in Australia of employed respondents (including both full- and part-time) aged between 18-54 years in: 1986 (754), 1993 (1081), and 1997 (1116 married/cohabiting respondents).

Harmonised international time use surveys from 1961-1999 are analysed in Gershuny (2000). This is based upon 44 surveys from 21 countries. Sullivan (2000) is based upon secondary analyses of nationally representative time-use diary data collected from British couples in 1975, 1987, and 1997. The 1975 data is based on a nationally representative sample providing 690 diaries. The 1987 data provides a sample of 392 English and Scottish couples. Sullivan's (2000) data are from a pilot for the 6th wave of the BHPS, and provide diaries kept by 202 couples.

we expect to find (Coltrane 2000:1212). With regards to the nature of long-term changes in this area, one time-use researcher has reflected:

> ... in contrast to metaphors of rapid dramatic change, I want to point to the significance of change based on a different metaphor, of a slow dripping of change that is perhaps unnoticeable from year to year but that in the end is persistent enough to lead to the slow dissolution of previously existing structures...
>
> Sullivan (2004:209-210)

It has been suggested that changes occur through a 'lagged adaption'. The lagged adaption thesis highlights long-term household negotiations to adjust to paid and unpaid work roles more equitably (Gershuny et. al. 1994), although this approach has been critiqued for naturalising slight changes (McMahon 1999:161). It remains to be seen to what extent equitable developments in the gendered division of domestic labour are occurring. In particular, if such change is by its very nature slow, can it ultimately have a significant structural impact? Analyses of time use data will assess the validity of these claims.

Australian data from 1974-1992 indicate a narrowing of the gap between men and women's time in unpaid work. This is attributed to women reducing their unpaid work rather than men's behaviour[8] (Bittman, 2004) as women made large-scale entry into the labour market. Other Australian data supports this conclusion, as women reduced time spent on housework by six hours since 1986, through sheer necessity (Baxter 2002:404-405). In terms of developments in household technologies, an analysis of longitudinal British Household Panel Survey data found that households who had acquired a washing machine in the last year had their housework time decline by 2.4 hours (Gershuny, 2004). Others argue that gendered divisions of domestic labour are resistant to innovations in household technologies, as the ownership of appliances increases the time spent on the task it is designed for (Bittman et. al. 2004).

[8] Bittman's (2004) arguments are based upon a review of findings from Australian time-use surveys.

1994 British Household Panel Survey data indicate that men spent a mean of 7 hours a week on domestic tasks per week, and women 17 hours. Men performed, on average, 24% of tasks (Bond and Sales 2001:238). However, averages may mask significant trends. Highly-educated men increased their contribution to housework and cooking from 1960-1990 (Gershuny 2000:192), again this is when women entered paid employment, which shows that some adjustments were made in the division of domestic chores on men's part. Furthermore, British women were found to have decreased their minutes per day dramatically spent on cooking and cleaning between 1975-1997, whilst men's contribution has increased. (Sullivan 2000:445).

However, 1991 National Child Development Survey data point to continuations in gendered divisions of chores, even when women work full-time. Two thirds of full-time working mothers are responsible for cooking and cleaning, and four out of five for laundry. There was some gendered specialisation in tasks with approximately three-quarters of fathers carried out household repairs and DIY – with little variation by couples' employment situation (Ferri and Smith 1996:29).

Analyses of 2002 International Social Survey Programme data suggest that in both Britain and Norway, links between behaviour and attitudes towards domestic labour are weakening. Gender role attitudes have become increasingly liberal, but they are not reflected in household task allocation (Crompton et. al. 2005:217), this is a curious finding given that Britain and Norway have very different welfare state histories. Secondary analysis of data collected in 1994 from married and co-habiting couples from Australia, Austria, Canada, Britain, Italy, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden and the US found that the more hours men spend in paid employment, the less likely they have been found to share equally. Women's longer working hours increase their

odds of having an equal share in domestic tasks and their odds that their partner is responsible for tasks (Geist, 2005). Conversely data from the 2002 and 2006 British Social Attitude Survey points to men's working hours as well as women's are associated with their divisions of domestic labour. Men working an average of 46 hours per week and longer hours had more traditional divisions of domestic labour. Where men have partners working full-time they were found to have significantly less traditional divisions of domestic labour (Crompton and Lyonette, 2008). Others have posited, based on a review of predominantly American studies, that women's paid employment does not impact upon men's performance of chores. Rather, the scheduling of women's paid work can compel men to undertake more domestic labour (Thompson and Walker 1989:856-857).

Domestic Labour: Qualitative Approaches

Drawing on the notion of 'family practices' (Morgan, 1996), the practices of the home are meshed into wider cultural, economic and political contexts, but practices occur in households' unique circumstances. Others have emphasised commonalities in terms of how households are sites where people 'do' gender. The situated 'doing' of gender implies a focus on interactional processes (West and Zimmerman, 1987). However, an Australian study found that gender was rarely mentioned as a reason for undertaking or avoiding tasks. Instead, tasks were rejected on the grounds of practicality or dislikes (Goodnow and Bowes 1994:18, 75). Others have argued that the presentation of partners' responsibility for the performance of domestic tasks as a mere practical issue manages to both subvert and contain issues of gendered inequalities in relationships (Pyke, 1996).

Household members' everyday activities link the internal occurrences and social organisation of their household to outside places and activities. Activities include the organisation of paid work,

education, leisure and friendship networks. The temporality and spatiality of households are bound with the temporality and spatiality of external social life (McKie et. al. 1999:8-9; Jarvis, 2005). This recognition is embedded in the 'total social organisation of labour' ('TSOL') approach which takes an inclusive approach to labour. Actual and conceptual binaries between: public/private, work/home and commodity/non-commodity are challenged. Institutions and their labouring activities are interrelated. It is the overall relational network between differential sectors rather than an organisation *per se* that is examined (Glucksmann 2000:20):

> ... the market and household economies could be conceptualised as two sectors, but not the only two, of a larger structure of production and reproduction in industrial societies. At any given time a particular form of structural division and connection exists between them such that they are articulated in a particular manner. In addition to the internal organisation of each, then, there is also a structure to the relation between them. What occurred in one would be affected by and in turn affect the other so that they are interdependent. By focusing on the articulation of sectors that are distinct but not autonomous, it becomes possible to conceptualise links between hierarchies of inequalities in each.
>
> Glucksmann (2000:19)

The value of the TSOL approach is that it enables an approach which avoids treating households as separate entities in the private sphere, they are rather spaces where people work out everyday lives (Gilroy 1999:158). For the purposes of this study this is a fruitful recognition as it enables a consideration of the linkages between fathers' access to and use of workplace flexibility and how this may impact upon their participation in domestic labour.

In terms of household task performance, men have been found to have a low participation in tasks that women report tendencies to dislike such as cooking and cleaning. It is claimed that this demonstrates that men can legitimately avoid disliked tasks (Edgell 1980:63-64). The conditions under which these household maintenance tasks are undertaken, namely that there is some potential to choose whether or not to take on substantial projects, are different from other forms

of domestic labour, which tie those who carry them out into a daily cycle of task accomplishment (Hochschild, 1989). Tasks such as DIY have some scope for creativity and since the outcomes of this work are socially visible, those who perform can receive praise for doing it (Chapman 2004:117). DIY has also been seen as a form of 'self-provisioning' (Pahl, 1984; Doucet 2006:186-188), in that a household member undertaking a maintenance task has saved the costs of hiring a tradesperson to do it instead, which is another aspect for praise. Home maintenance continues has been found to be largely a male responsibility (Baxter, 2002). This indicates that males' participation in these tasks is a long continuing trend that has been identified in past studies (Edgell, 1980; Coltrane 1996:65).

Women in an Australian study remarked how a 'really good husband' eases their burden of accomplishing household tasks (Connell, 2005). Male help is not necessarily expected, with women viewing it as a 'bonus' (Gilroy, 1999). If help is received via women delegating tasks to men the domestic labour literature draws our attention to how delegating domestic work only creates more work (Hochschild, 1989). By constructing themselves as waiting for partners' direction, men are able to maintain their willingness to undertake chores, even though they do not regularly perform them (Goodnow and Bowes, 1994). These findings reflect how the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that tasks are undertaken and to a particular standard remains largely with women (Gregory 1999:62). In this light, a distinction can be drawn between 'helping' with household chores and 'responsibility' for their accomplishment (Berk 1985:4):

> ... shared or interchangeable task-performance is one thing, but shared or interchangeable responsibility is quite another.
>
> Oakley (1974:159)

Women's expressions of gratitude towards men for their help are interpreted as reinforcing how housework remains women's responsibility (Charles and Kerr 1988:50). As Hochschild

(1989:211) has remarked, appreciating that a partner 'bears the second shift can be another way of keeping her doing it'. Gratitude is a double-faced dynamic reflecting wider social changes, and the private meanings shared in a relationship (Hochschild 2003:104-105, 116-117). Gratitude rests upon a distinction drawn between help and holding the emotional burden (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995) of being responsible for performing daily household tasks. Partners' gratitude also, operates with reference to a normative understanding of how much domestic labour 'other' men do. As such it is underpinned by a 'pragmatic' nature of judgement (Hochschild, 2003).

Displaying occasional willingness to perform tasks has been interpreted as a means of contributing to a sense of fairness in the household division of labour without challenging the day-to-day responsibility for cleaning and hoovering (Coltrane (1996:68). This occurs through the power of beliefs. *Beliefs* in fairness in how domestic tasks are shared between partners may ease resentment over one partner holding the everyday responsibility for task accomplishment:

> The maintenance of belief in this underlying assumption of fairness was an important factor in the negotiation of family behaviour... various gestures and coping mechanisms were used to maintain this *belief*, in the face of practical considerations.
> Backett (1982:39)

The subjective meanings attached to the performance of specific household tasks may bear little relationship to their practical contribution. If a task was undertaken on an occasional basis as a 'gesture', it helped to maintain a belief in mutually shared responsibilities (Backett 1982:44). These beliefs in fairness were found to help to manage disjunctures between belief and action regarding domestic labour (Bittman and Lovejoy, 1993). On a more practical level, it needs to be considered that if men's participation in domestic work is not undertaken on a routine basis, it may be remembered more vividly when it has been undertaken (Coltrane 1996:93).

Standards as to how domestic chores are carried out serve to define, underpin, and validate task completion (Oakley 1974:100, 110) and to maintain the running of household order (Martin, 1984). What can be problematic with domestic standards is that they are often unarticulated, particularly the role that they play in an overall routine of domestic labour, which has been characterised as a series of daily 'never-ending cycles' (Coltrane 1996:79). Standards are maintained through the work of monitoring for when tasks need to be performed. Monitoring is characterised by its invisibility (DeVault 1991:140-141). This moves us towards an understanding of how domestic work is highly skilled both in terms of time management and task completion (Anderson 2000:12). Lone fathers' experiences point to the hidden nature of household management. Lone fathers who had been 'helpers' to their partners were found to be struck by their new need to create daily schedules and routines[9] (Fassinger 1993:200-201). However, we must not overlook how lone fathers' performance of tasks can also take on meanings, particularly the notion of domestic labour as a form of care (McMahon 1999:33). This mirrors Burgoyne and Clark's (1983) point that lone fathers' cooking can take on a symbolic meaning as an expression of care.

Differing standards may be used by men to justify unequal participation (Bittman and Lovejoy, 1993). This can occur through 'exploratory incidents' (Backett, 1982) where one partner can claim that they are unable to perform a task because they do not have the knowledge of how to perform it, which provides them with the competency to carry it out. Men can have been found to also subvert partners' standards by claiming they have a superior level of tolerance:

[9] There may be a greater extent of diversity in relation to lone fathers household work routines. Barker (1994:121-123) found that almost half his sample of thirty-five lone fathers had a routine. In itself, routines varied from a systematic way of doing tasks to a more general pattern. For the remaining half who did not have a routine, it was the result of deciding that they did not need one, or it was experienced as problematic.

> The discourse of the 'superior tolerance' male subject implies a binary view of the other, establishing a female subject position of irrational, fetishist intolerance to dirt and disorder. While women may accept the male attribution of pathological personal characteristics, this does not automatically mean that women uphold men's standards as rational.
>
> Bittman and Lovejoy (1993:314)

Thus, a partner invoking their standards for when a certain domestic task needs to be performed becomes relegated to an issue of a seemingly 'greater need' to carry it out (Hochschild, 1989). Others have documented how standards persist as an issue when couples attempt to share domestic tasks (Coltrane 1996:105), but that there is also the potential for couples to reach compromises in their standards (Goodnow and Bowes, 1994).

Fathers and Care

Fathers' Time Use Trends[10]

A secondary analysis of UK Time Use Survey 2000 data found that fathers' share of childcare stands at 28% for all fathers and 30% for fathers of children under five. Care is operationalised in terms of physical care, feeding, playing, teaching and talking to the child, but the specific analysis reported here only analysed minutes spent on childcare (Bruegel and Gray, 2005). The average paternal time across Europe is 16 hours per week, whilst European mothers spend on average 39 hours per week in care. However, it is important to note that Europe contains a mixture of nations with different welfare states with differing policy provisions for care, so it is likely that this average masks variations. Within this the UK has the second highest paternal mean of 19 weekly hours. UK Mothers are second highest at mean of 51 hours per week

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[10] Warren (2003) provides a secondary analysis of 1995 *British Household Panel Survey* data, based on a subsample of 992 dual-waged couples.

Yeung et. al. (2001) conducted a secondary analysis of the 1997 *Panel Study of Income Dynamics.* This is a representative, US, sample of around 2,400 families with one child aged between 0-12 years. Yeung et. al. (2001) based their analysis on 1,761 children who lived with both natural or adoptive parents. McBride et. al. (2004) provide a further secondary analysis, based on 2,215 children living with a mother and secondary carer. Fuligni and Brooks-Gunn (2004) studied 493 two-parent families with a child aged under 3 years.

Flouri and Buchanan (2003) carried out a secondary analysis of *National Child Development Survey* data. 17,000 children were sampled and data were collected in 1965, 1969 and 1974. Flouri and Buchanan (2003) restricted their analysis to 7,802 children who had lived continuously with their parents. Of concern is that the original dataset is dated: the parenting of the 1960s and 1970s may differ from that today.

The findings of a Swedish longitudinal study of 144 parents are reported in Chuang et. al. (2004). Families where both parents lived together were sampled. Data were collected in six phases: when children were aged a mean of 15.9 months, 2.3 years, 3.3 years, 6.7 years, 8.4 years, and 15.2 years.

Bittman and Wajcman (2004) is based upon a secondary analysis of the *Multinational Time Budget Data Archive* and the *Australian Bureau of Statistics 1992 Time Use Survey.* The subset consists of surveys conducted in: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States. This provides a pooled dataset of 46,933 respondents. Craig (2007) is a secondary analysis of the 1997 *Australian Bureau of Statistics' Time-Use Survey.* Her analysis was restricted to households where adults are either childless couples or couples with at least one child under 12 years (n=1,210 households).

European-level data are analysed by Koslowski (2007) from the 1994-2001 *European Community Household Panel.* Its first year consisted of a sample of over 60,000 households across 12 member states (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK).

The 1995 *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* is a US representative study of over 20,000 adolescents. Harris and Ryan (2004) conducted a secondary analysis based on the following subsamples: adolescents living with biological parents ($N = 9,686$), biological father and stepmother ($N = 506$), lone father ($N = 584$), stepfather and biological mother ($N = 2,490$), adoptive mother and adoptive father ($N = 369$), and surrogate father and surrogate or no mother ($N = 535$).

(Koslowski 2007:106-107). That fathers in the UK have a relatively high weekly average is a surprise given that leave for care is a recent policy development, with previous UK governments taking the stance that it was inappropriate to intervene in the 'private' sphere of families (Hawthorne Kirk and Part, 1995), given that this is based upon data collected between 1994 to 2001. This average masks some interesting variations between fathers by sector of employment, as fathers employed in the UK's public sector have a paternal mean of 22 hours a week (n=408), and private sector fathers have a mean of 17 hours a week (n=1295) (Koslowski 2007:115).

A secondary analysis of British longitudinal data from the 1960s found that fathers were more likely to manage and take outings with sons rather than daughters aged both seven and eleven (Flouri and Buchanan, 2003). Others found, using more recent data from 1990s in the US and Europe, that children's gender is not a significant individual predictor of father involvement (McBride et. al. 2004; Koslowski 2007:125). A further analysis of US data points to the emergence of a 'new father' role on weekends in intact families, since fathers' wages and working hours have a negative relationship with time spent with children on weekdays but not on weekends (Yeung et. al. 2001). A further analysis of the same dataset, restricted to a sub-sample of two-parent families with a child aged under three, found that the amount of time spent by both parents with children increases on weekends. Fathers' time increases by over two hours: from 2 hours 17 minutes to 4 hours 37 minutes. Mothers' time increases by around 1.5 hours from 4 hours 44 minutes, to 6 hours 12 minutes (Fuligni and Brooks-Gunn 2004:351). However, caution is needed in terms of how generalisable these findings may be to the UK, as US social policy is marked by the lack of provisions targeted at fathers. The majority of the population engaged in paid employment are not covered by social protection, reliant instead on markets and families for care (Orloff and Monson, 2002). Fathers spend greater amounts of time playing with and caring for children on weekends than on weekdays. The findings from a Swedish longitudinal survey

were that fathers are increasingly accessible to children as they age, but time spent playing with and caring for declined (Chuang et. al. 2004). As with the US data, there are similar limitations with this Swedish study, as their welfare state has targeted policies towards men as fathers, which include fathers taking proportion of parental leave and joint custody laws (Bergman and Hobson, 2002). In Australia, an analysis of time-use survey data from 1997 found that physical care is the childcare activity exhibiting the most extreme differences in relative gendered task allocations. As a primary activity it accounts for over half a woman's childcare time, but less than a third of a man's. Women spend 22% and men 40% of their time with children in interactive care (Craig 2007:63).

Maternal employment positively correlates with father involvement longitudinally in Sweden. When children are aged 1.3 years, mothers who worked more had partners who were more involved, and spent more time playing with, caring for and being solely responsible for care on weekdays. Maternal employment correlated with overall paternal responsibility when children were aged 3.3 years. Estimates of time fathers spent with children at 8.4 years were associated with mothers' working hours (Chuang et. al. 2004:145). Collective parenting strategies with adolescent children were found to be more evident amongst US resident parents who were both adoptive or biological parents, and less in stepfamilies or when biological parents live apart (Harris and Ryan, 2004). Adolescents report relatively high levels of closeness with biological fathers and are relatively less close to resident stepfathers: 31.8% of resident biological fathers are highly involved in contrast with 19.5% of resident nonbiological fathers (Harris and Ryan, 2004). British lone fathers spend most paternal time paternal time amongst line fathers in Europe, reporting a mean of 37 hours per week (n=51) against a European mean of 23 hours (Koslowski 2007:120). The UK's step-fathers have a mean paternal time of 20 hrs per week

(n=260) and is one hour more than the average paternal mean reported above. This is joint highest in Europe with Denmark and Germany (Koslowski 2007:124).

Fathers' Care Practices

From a gender equality perspective, the failure of fathers to engage routinely in the everyday work of 'caring for' children holds back women's progression, as it would appear that women still carry out the bulk of this work. In this light, changing men's childcare practices is a priority for policy (Hearn and Pringle, 2006). In concentrating caring provisions on mothers there is a risk of entrenching gendered discrimination as the potential costs of employing women are perceived as greater than those of men (Houston and Waumsley, 2003; Smeaton 2006:2).

Policy shifts around parenting and employment have been underpinned by a 'model of (gender-neutral) familial responsibility' (Collier and Sheldon 2008:118). When government policy turns to the practices of the home, an approach that is gender neutral, that is to say, silent on issues of gender is not adequate. There is a need to consider how people engage with the labour market over the lifecourse and the effects that policies have on the practices of unpaid caring (Rake, 2001). With regards to fathering, when the term 'father' is evoked by New Labour, it is not accompanied by an understanding of the complexities of the power relations between men and women (Featherstone, 2006). 'Father-sensitive legislation'[11] has been advocated as a more satisfactory approach to engage fathers in care (Collier and Sheldon 2008:122). This was recognised in the interview with the Fatherhood Group, one of my key actors, although it was couched in terms of family support services actively engaging with fathers:

> ... what we've always advocated is that there's a level playing field. There's traditionally always, always been support for mothers in bringing up children.

[11] Government plans to 'dad-proof' family policies have recently been announced. It should be noted that this does not include improving paid paternity leave beyond the current two weeks' provisions (*The Guardian* 21.02.2009).

> Everybody recognises that it's a very difficult job to do and we should be supporting people in that role, and traditionally there's been mothers and toddlers' groups, the kind of interaction that goes on between health visitors and mothers. And I think that all that we've advocated right from the very start is that there should be a level playing field. Those kinds of services should be available to men as to fathers, as well as to mothers. And that's not the case at the moment... And yet we've got these figures that say a third of all childcare in the UK today is done by men. And we want people to take on this role; we want fathers to take on this responsibility with their children. Seems to me only reasonable that we should offer them the same level of support as we offer the mothers.
>
> Fatherhood Organisation Representative

Focusing support at mothers may reinforce gendered assumptions about caring responsibilities. In the interview with the representative of the Father-Child Group, one of my key actors, uneasiness was felt at how the school in which the group is based was not father-inclusive, which prompted the establishment of the group:

> At the time it was set up, I set it up, or we set it up the word inclusion was high on the agenda. It still is to an extent, but at that time it was new. And one of the other reasons why I created this, I wanted it was not just to do with the development, but I sat down and thought about this word, and I realised after a little while erm, were we fully inclusive you know, in the school? And I was satisfied that we were, except for one section and that was the Dads and Fathers.
>
> Father-Child Group Representative

To build on the need for a father-sensitive awareness, the literature on fathers' care practices will now be reviewed.

An Australian study (Lupton and Barclay, 1997) of first-time fathers found that most embraced the discourse of the 'involved' father who builds a close and loving relationship with their child through shared activities. However, paid employment heavily impacted upon the amount of time that fathers were able to give to childcare. Having the time to interact with children was crucial in how skilled fathers became as carers, to become familiar with their needs. Even if fathers are moving towards 'involved fathering', views asserting parental gender differences through

'nature' persist (Plantin et. al. 2003). The 'belief in the mysterious and symbolic power of *mothering*' (Doucet 2006:134 original emphasis) was found amongst primary caregiving fathers and their partners. More broadly it has been argued that images of fathers nurturing infants are strongly regarded as problematic in Western culture (Parke 1996:44). This mirrors observations made about 'emotion work', where women are perceived by men to be 'naturally' better at its accomplishment (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995). In this context, other studies indicate that fathers of infants expect to establish a fuller relationship with children as they became older when they feel that they would become more responsive (Lupton and Barclay 1997:130; Lewis 1986:117-119). In researching fathering during infancy, it will be seen whether or not fathers engage with these discourses, and how fathers learn to become carers whilst in paid employment.

Research on fathering during the early years of childhood draws our attention to the importance of playing with children for fathers. It has been found that father involvement in play activities is at its highest level during infancy and the preschool years (Parke, 1996). It is not uncommon for new fathers to view short periods of play with infants as making up for their absence during the day (LaRossa and LaRossa 1981:49-50). Fathers stress their role as 'playmates' for children, but this trend has developed in the context of the 'differential culture of recreation for men and women' (Dienhart and Daly 1997:161). However, engaging in activities (Lewis and Welsh, 2005) with children is an important time for fathers to establish a connection with children. Play has been held as a kind of nurturance that fathers engage in as a means of relating to their children (Doucet, 2006). Furthermore, there is evidence that fathers engage in outside play with children as a means of responding to children's physical and developmental needs as they reason that it is beneficial for children (Doucet 2006:115). Thus in a qualitative study of fathers, this literature indicates that when fathers talk about play with children, it is important to ask what this time means for fathers in their interviews.

A study of children's later childhood experiences - a lifecourse stage when children learn to become competent in new social locations and relationships - found that fathers were seen by children as an important link to the public world (Brannen et. al. 2000). This resonates with the ethics of care's analysis of learning to become independent through others' care. Fathers' role in developing children's independence has been documented by previous studies (Doucet, 2006; Brandth and Kvande, 1998[12]). However, encouraging children's independence can be seen as an area of caregiving that possesses masculine qualities (Doucet 2006:196). To add further weight to this consideration is that fathering has been located in a wide variety of settings. Warin et. al. (1999) use a four-fold typology to point to the diverse nature of fathering practices in that fathering can take place: outside the home, within the home, as hobby-related, and as related to selected domestic activities. As Warin et. al. argue, the variety of sites of fathering demonstrates how father-adolescent relationships are often carried out through shared activities. This study has been influential in calls made for research on fathers to move beyond the setting of the home (Clarke and O'Brien 2004:50). Therefore, research on fathers has led to a questioning of artificial distinction between the home and the outside world (Hill, 2005) which is a pertinent point to carry forward to the design of this study. In developing a father-sensitive approach, it would seem important to consider the spatial nature of fathers' engagement with care.

The 'discourse of individuation' emphasises the process of adolescent separation in relationships with parents and other family members (Brannen et. al. 1994). Parenting in adolescence can be particularly fraught as both parents and teens hold differing values and aims concerning their relationships:

[12] Brandth and Kvande (1998) found that fathers encouraged their children's independence but that this practice occurred with some tensions for mothers' parenting in that this form of 'masculine care' was accorded a higher status. Furthermore, mothers feel that they need to have a higher level of involvement in childcare since they perceive fathers' approaches to be insufficient and too relaxed.

> ... there are some contradictions here: a process which strives to balance equality and mutual dependence, and autonomy and emotional connectedness...
>
> Solomon et. al. 2002:967-968

In this context, the literature points to the need to understand how fathers 'negotiate' parent-adolescent relationships (Jones and Wallace, 1992) as fathers are mindful of adolescents' emerging independence, whilst maintaining an emotional connection. At this stage, different approaches in fathers' nurturance have been found, some fathers identify with imparting their values and skills; others stress their emotional support, affection or playfulness (Cohen 1993:13). It may be that the context within which fathering occurs facilitates men's involvement in this care, such as its links to traditionally-held notions of the paternal disciplinary role. Furthermore, teaching children appropriate values is a less time-intensive activity compared with providing more general care (Ferri and Smith 1996:24). These aspects correspond with an overarching responsibility for children that more closely resembles 'caring about' than the everyday work of 'caring for' (Lewis and Welsh, 2005). In this light, fathers may be able to feel responsible through using:

> ... a diffuse definition of taking care of children, in the sense of some sort of on-going responsibility and commitment, not directly connected to the practical responsibility for initiating and maintaining caring activities.
>
> van Dongen (1995:101)

It may be that caring about children by instilling personal values and providing guidance whilst children learn to become independent can be more readily reconciled with the demands of full-time paid employment.

However, providing guidance to adolescents may not be unique to fathers, it comprises a common core of parenthood for both mothers and fathers (Brannen et. al. 1994). Guidance may not just be provided for adolescents' needs in the present but also in terms of their future: parents' hope that children share their values and beliefs (Backett 1982:126). This alerts us to the possibility that fathers may leave certain areas of guidance to mothers, whilst fathers may provide other forms of guidance. Father-daughter relationships in adolescence have been found to change as embodiment becomes much more of a prominent issue. The primary caregiving fathers in Doucet's study emphasised their physical distance from daughters as they felt hesitant about hugging them. Parents may have ideals of close relationships with their adolescent children, but they may not emerge as 'pure relationships' (Giddens, 1992) since parents may become more silent rather than having intense mutual disclosures with children (Jamieson, 1999). This is indicative of the routine emotional care that mothers provide during adolescence (Brannen et. al. 1994). Fathers' relationships with daughters during adolescence provide an example of fathers stressing separation and differentiation, whilst mothers tend to focus upon connectedness and closeness (Parke 1996:144).

Lone fathers' personal identity as a father may come to the fore over their worker self (O'Brien 1982:185). Sole-custody fathers can feel that in parenting alone they become different kinds of fathers. There is some potential for divides between motherly and fatherly nurturance to be permeable. When fathers care for children alone for long periods of time, the 'gendered borders' of caring can be broken down (Doucet 2006:132). For instance, lone parents' occupancy of the space between motherhood and fatherhood can lead to a reflective awareness on parenthood (Brannen et. al. 1994). However, an understanding of lone fathers' caring practices as a continuum of patriarchal-pioneering dimensions (Barker, 1994) illuminates how lone fathers are not characterised by a singular way of relating to their children. However, lone fathers have been

found to be able to draw upon the support of female kin (Doucet, 2006; c.f. Finch, 1989; Charles et. al. 2008:118) or other family members such as grandparents (Ellison et. al. 2009). Although lone fathers' support networks of kin and friends provide emotional support, they do not carry out routine childcare (Risman, 1986).

Summary

This chapter opened by outlining legal entitlements in terms of leave from paid employment for childcare purposes that were in place at the time of the fieldwork. These are: paternity leave, adoptive leave, the right to request flexible working, time off for dependents in an emergency, and parental leave. The chapter then reviewed the concept of work/life balance. Fundamental criticisms have been made of work/life balance as operating as an individualistic framework, particularly the idea of achieving a balance. This plays down external constraints, which limits policy discussions around work/life balance.

Turning to trends in flexible working provisions, both WERS 2004 and the 3rd Work/life Balance Employer Survey found there had been growth in arrangements. However, the availability of flexitime varied by sector and employees' gender, but it was a popular arrangement amongst fathers. The WERS 2004 found that flexible working was most common in the public sector. Another curious finding was that variable numbers of employees were unaware whether flexible working arrangements were available to them. In terms of paternity leave, most fathers took this leave, with the public sector having the greatest take-up.

The organisational context was discussed. Managerial and professional jobs are associated with autonomy, but the importance of finishing tasks becomes internalised. Organisational discourses of time also play a role here, in terms of presenteeism. This acts to constrain employees'

autonomy. In this context, employees can be hesitant to raise work/life issues. For this culture to be tackled, flexibility has to become the norm. Establishing flexible working would be greatly helped by greater statutory underpinnings. Previous research has identified fathers who have been influenced by their working culture to plan fatherhood around career demands. In the organisational contexts of SMEs, a tendency for ad hoc arrangements has been noted, however, informality can restrict employees' sense of entitlement to flexible working.

It has been found that there has been some narrowing of the gap between women's and men's time spent on domestic labour, but some of this is accounted for by women decreasing their time spent on tasks. Others have argued that it is the scheduling of partners' employment that facilitates male participation in tasks. This would resonate with a treatment of households as meshing into their wider cultural, political and economic contexts. In terms of studies on domestic labour, women do not necessarily expect men's help, but where this help is offered it can reinforce that the ultimate responsibility for completing tasks rests with women. The concept of gratitude also rests upon a distinction that is drawn between help and responsibility. Furthermore, partners' gratitude is a normative concept in that it rests upon perceptions of how much work other partners' do as a basis for its expression. The importance of standards as both defining and underpinning the performance of tasks was explained.

The review of time-use studies on care demonstrated the persistency of female-carer arrangements. A curious finding from US data was that a 'new father' role is emerging in two-parent families on weekends. In terms of children's development, fathers were found to become increasingly available to children, as they grow older. It was also seen that maternal employment positively correlates with aspects of longitudinal paternal involvement.

In terms of care, there is a gender equality stance which recognises that policy provisions should not be exclusively focused on mothers. However, policy approaches are relatively silent on these issues, favouring a gender-neutral stance. Amongst studies of first-time fathers of infants, views of mothers as somehow being the more 'natural' carers are a powerful constraint to father involvement. However, play has been highlighted as an important way for fathers to spend time with their children, and it can be understood as a form of care and nurturance. In later childhood, fathers are seen as an important bridge to the public world. This also links in with the negotiation of parent-teen relationships, and the roles that fathers are able to take on during this time.

The terrain for the way forward in this study has been sketched, by reviewing the fields of literature concerning organisational contexts and how these mediate flexible working, fathers' experiences of care, and their participation in domestic labour. Thus, this review has identified a lacuna in the existing research literature that relates to the employment practices that men adopt to take account of their fathering, and how fathers negotiate care and domestic labour. We will now turn to the theoretical 'backdrop' for this research.

3.
Fathers' Experiences of Paid Work, Care and Domestic Labour: Orienting frameworks and concepts

Introduction

In this chapter, the two orienting frameworks for this study are presented. Neither is exhaustive; rather each brings its own strengths and weaknesses to this work. Accounts of both orienting frameworks are provided so that we can see which aspects aid the interpretation of fathers' accounts of paid work, care and domestic labour. The first framework introduced is the ethics of care. An indepth analysis and exploration of the nature of care as a process is provided, and the nature of everyday negotiations of care is highlighted. This is accompanied by a discussion of the measurement of and character of paternal involvement in care. The second orienting framework is debates over structure and agency. Giddens' work on structuration theory is introduced, as this reconciles both structure and agency by treating them as *both* necessary to our understanding. So that this discussion is not too broad, treatments of the structure-agency dynamic in previous research on work and care are outlined. A particular concern here will be to establish a contextually-sensitive approach with which to understand choices made over work and care. The chapter will end with a discussion of the key concepts that underpin this thesis. Having outlined what follows in this chapter, we turn to a discussion of the ethics of care.

The Ethics of Care

To understand fathers' experiences of care and engagements with care we need an indepth and processual understanding of care. However, care is a problematic concept which is dependent upon how it is defined or operationalised (O'Brien, 2005). In the 1980s, research drew attention to caring as a gendered activity that has been culturally defined as seemingly 'natural' for women to perform (Finch and Groves 1983:3). This led to an understanding of care as both a

labour and a love (Graham, 1983). However, it is common *social* practices and responsibilities that have created relationships between gender and caring as opposed to making essentialist assertions that women have superior moral reasoning by virtue of their gender (McDowell 2004:156). For instance, in addition to childcare, eldercare is commonly delegated to women too[13]. These assumptions have been built into social policy concerning eldercare, where there are strong expectations that women will provide the unpaid work that entails caring for the sick and elderly (Finch 1989:125).

In the literature on care, a highly influential distinction between *caring for* and *caring about* has been drawn:

> Caring *about* someone, in the sense of feeling affection for them, is based on spontaneous feelings of affinity, and as an emotion *per se* it has little implication for how people spend their time – except that they might want to spend it together. On the other hand, caring *for* someone, in the sense of servicing their needs, may have little or nothing to do with caring *about* someone... caring *for* someone necessarily involves the consumption of time on the part of the carer... In contrast, caring about someone can be experienced without using up time devoted exclusively to experiencing those emotions.
>
> Ungerson (1983:31-32 emphasis in the original)

However, more recent notions of care have emphasised care as a practice: a practice that involves *both* thought and action. Conceptualising thought and action as interrelated in the practice of care (Tronto 1993:108) moves beyond what others have felt to be an artificial dichotomy of labour and love (Mason, 1996). Tronto (1993:105-108) has identified four phases of caring[14]. The first phase is *caring about* which is the initial recognition that some care will be necessary. Next, *taking care of* – this is when some responsibility is taken for the perceived need

[13] There are 5.2 million carers in England and Wales, according to 2001 Census figures. Over a million of this total provide more than fifty hours of care per week. The fifties was found to be the age group with the largest proportion of people providing care, with more than one in five people aged 50-59 providing some unpaid care. Almost one in four women (24.6%) in this age range provide care, compared with 17.9% of men (National Statistics, 2003).

[14] This is a broad conception of care, what Thomas (1993) refers to as a *unified* concept of care that seeks to encompass a wide range of activities as opposed to a *partial*, more situated, treatment of care.

for care and where thought is given as to how best address it. *Care-giving* entails the meeting of care needs, and finally, *care receiving* occurs when the care recipient responds to the care received.

In terms of understanding social relationships, the ethics of care deconstructs the normative idea of the independent individual (Sevenhuijsen 2002:139). Here, oppositions drawn between the individual and society are denied through a relational ontology in which individuals are embedded in networks of care and responsibility:

> ... the moral subject in the discourse of care already lives in a network of relation and (inter)dependence, in which he/she has to find balances between different forms of care: for the self, for others and for the relations between these.
>
> Sevenhuijsen (2002:131)

The ethics of care might be found questionable on the grounds that its 'other'-orientation, in terms of interdependencies, downplays the importance of subjects' right to self-determination. However, proponents of the ethics of care would argue that they seek to empower caregivers through making demands that they have the ability to carry out their responsibilities adequately (Clement 1996:27).

Accordingly, the ethics of care reasserts the importance of caring roles in our lives. This actively encourages and celebrates care, to the point where it is argued that paid work needs to be organised around care and not vice-versa (Williams, 2004). Therefore in addition to being a moral concept, care can also underpin a political framework, which encourages a more just and humane society, as we are able understand ourselves as "interdependent beings" (Tronto 1993:21). This strong emphasis upon care is very much needed when it is argued that the business ethic can enter into family and caring responsibilities. As care is a moral activity,

involving relationships and reciprocity that cannot easily be reconciled with a business ethic, contradictions arise in experiences of caring and time. The individual is left to negotiate these challenges in isolation, due to the lacking institutional support provided in overcoming the 'blurred' boundaries between work and home (Brannen, 2005).

A strength of the ethics of care is that it is able to respect diversity, as it does not favour any one context of care over others. Diversity in caring arrangements emerges because in everyday life we negotiate 'to do the right thing' and so a plethora of caring solutions are 'worked at' (Williams, 2004). This approach situates care in concrete social practices whereby we reflect upon the appropriate actions in specific contexts. In this light, the ethics of care is best understood as a framework of responsibility rather than a universalistic discourse of rights and duties that are rigidly applied in situations (Sevenhuijsen, 1998).

A further insight that care theorists have offered is the understanding of how autonomy is not achieved in an individual sense, and thus accords value to those who help in the process of fostering autonomy. An individual's autonomy is gained in a process of learning from others who have already gained their sense of independence (Clement 1996:24). Here:

> ... we *learn* to become autonomous, and we learn this competency not through isolation from others, but through relationships with others... For it is the support and guidance of our family, friends and teachers that foster the skills of self-examination allowing us to be autonomous. In other words, relationships with others teach us to be ourselves.
>
> Clement (1996:24 emphasis in original)

It is through both 'connection and interaction' with others, initially, those who care for and socialise us, that we are able to develop in both a moral and rational sense (Sevenhuijsen 1998:62-63; Friedman 2000:39-40). Fundamentally, a part of our interdependence is that we can

only become autonomous after a relatively long time of dependency (Tronto 1993:162; Barclay 2000:57). This reconfigures the concept of individual autonomy into what is a 'relational autonomy' which is underpinned by agents' social embeddedness (Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000:4).

Fathers and Care

In terms of time usage, fathers' involvement in childcare has been defined using a tripartite typology of: *primary* (main) activity, *secondary* activity (carried out in addition to the primary activity, such as talking to a young child whilst bathing them), and *tertiary* activity in which there is a withdrawal of social contact (for instance, a father arranging to take paternity leave) (LaRossa and LaRossa 1981:50-56). An alternative model similarly divides paternal involvement into three components: interaction, availability, and responsibility. Interaction addresses the extent of fathers' direct contact with children through caretaking and shared activities. Availability is related to interaction as it concerns fathers' potential availability or presence for interaction, whether or not direct interaction takes place. Responsibility encompasses efforts to ensure that children are taken care of and arranging resources where needed such as appropriate childcare and attendance at medical appointments (Lamb et. al. 1985). However, this tripartite typology rests upon ambiguous definitions and a limited consideration of father involvement (Palkowitz 1997:203). A particular issue is that:

> Laypersons do not think in terms of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. They tend to list and describe a wide array of ways to be involved without classifying them into categories... the professional literature is too sterile and circumscribed.
>
> Palkowitz (1997:208)

Palkowitz (1997) builds on these limitations by expanding and widening involvement into fifteen categories[15] grouped under three multiple domains: cognitive ('reasoning, planning, evaluating, monitoring'), affective ('emotions, feelings, and affection'), and behavioural (overtly observable involvement including feeding, talking, teaching) (Palkowitz 1997:208; 211).

The 'deficit paradigm' that can be detected in some research on fatherhood whereby "men generally perform inadequately" has been questioned (Hawkins and Dollahite 1997:3). A particular issue raised with the role-inadequacy perspective[16] is that it is underpinned by a narrow conceptualisation of care that continues to understand fathers as less caring through implying 'that to be good fathers, men must become like mothers' (Hawkins and Dollahite 1997:14). To overcome the limitations of the role-inadequacy perspective, an ethic of 'generative fathering' has been developed which explores how fathers address children's needs '*by working to create and maintain a developing ethical relationship with them*' (Dollahite et. al. 1997:18 emphasis in original). The conduct of generative fathering is termed 'fatherwork'. This involves fathers making a sustained effort with children and it links routine tasks with joyous care such as playing. These are not understood as opposing commitments (Dollahite et. al. 1997:21). However, fatherwork does occur under constraints which fathers negotiate:

> Fathers must negotiate with their partners, their children, and others and must prioritise obligations and decide on options. They must use scarce time, money, energy, and space that may involve choosing between self and child, partner and

[15] The fifteen categories are as follows: communication, teaching, monitoring, thought processes, errands, caregiving, child-related maintenance, shared interests, availability, planning, shared activities, providing, affection, protection, and supporting emotionally. Comprehensive, although by no means exhaustive, examples are provided for each category (Palkowitz 1997:209-210). During the analysis and writing up of this research I have returned to this conceptualisation of involvement with its empirically grounded examples of how fathers both experience and relate to care on an everyday basis.

[16] There is an implicit tension in this critique of the role-inadequacy view of fathering as Hawkins and Dollahite (1997:3) concede that:

> There is, unfortunately, some validity to this general portrait of deficiency; it accurately and tragically describes too many fathers (and perhaps all fathers at times). It fails to describe many good fathers, however.

> child, one child and another child, work and home, community and family, extended family and children, recreation and work and so on...
>
> Dollahite et. al. (1997:25)

Responding to changes in children is another fundamental element of 'fatherwork' which is negotiated (Dollahite et. al. 1997:26). This rests upon an understanding of fathering as a dynamic relationship with the child whereby a child's development necessitates differing needs to which fathers accordingly adjust. The ultimate developmental goal of this care is to nurture maturity and integrity in the next generation (Dollahite et. al. 1997:29). However, it remains to be seen how fully fathers identify with care in their accounts.

Structure and Agency

This section discusses the classic sociological conundrum of structure and agency. However, this is a partial treatment of structure and agency which utilises the concepts from structuration theory. Structuration theory is drawn upon in the manner which Giddens (1984:326) has endorsed as 'sensitizing device' for empirical research. Therefore, this discussion is not an exhaustive treatment of structuration theory, but it does draw out concepts form a useful 'lens' for this study. The theory of structuration's starting point is the lack of a theory of action in the social sciences. Giddens seeks to overcome the opposition between voluntarism and determinism in social theory by positing that an adequate treatment of human agency must be connected to a theory of the acting subject (Giddens 1979:2). Therefore in place of the dualism between the individual and society (Giddens 1979:4) or subject and object, voluntarism and determinism, structuration substitutes these with the notion of the 'duality of structure':

> By duality of structure, I mean the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution.
>
> Giddens (1979:5)

The recursive nature of social life demonstrates the mutual dependence of structure and agency (Giddens 1979:69). The concept of agency addresses people's capability to do things – this refers to events of which an individual is the perpetrator (Giddens 1984:9). This treatment of agency recognises that people have the potential to act otherwise and that agents do not have a straightforwardly pre-determined future (Giddens 1993:81). This rests upon an understanding of action or agency as a 'continuous flow of conduct', not a series of discrete acts that are combined together (Giddens 1979:55). As part of the duality of structure, rules and resources are drawn upon by actors in their interactions, but they are also reconstituted through these interactions (Giddens 1979:71). This is the means of system reproduction (Giddens 1984:19). It is through their activities that agents reproduce the conditions that make their activities possible (Giddens 1984:2). Therefore, people's regularised acts are viewed as 'situated practices' which connect both action and structure (Giddens 1979:56).

A central notion of the duality of structure is that social actors are knowledgeable about the social systems which they both constitute and reproduce through their action. As Giddens (1979:71) has argued, 'institutions do not just work 'behind the backs of the social actors who produce and reproduce them'. It is argued that actors' knowledge figures in their practical social conduct in three different ways. Firstly, it enters through 'unconscious sources of cognition' where actors hold their knowledge on an unconscious level. Secondly, actors utilise their 'practical consciousness' which are the tacit stocks of knowledge that can be drawn upon whilst carrying out social activities. Finally, 'discursive consciousness' is the knowledge that actors are

able to express on a discursive level. Of relevance to the social researcher carrying out qualitative research, is Giddens' argument that all social actors have some degree of 'discursive penetration' of the social systems to which they contribute (Giddens 1979:5). This means that actors have accountability in that the accounts that they provide of their conduct draw upon the same stocks of knowledge that are also drawn upon in the production and reproduction of their action (Giddens 1979:57). However, the accounts that actors can provide of their reasons are bounded by tacitly employed mutual knowledge (Giddens 1979:58). A further limitation of actors' accounts is that they are by necessity spatially and historically located, so that actors' competent knowledge lessens in contexts that are beyond their everyday activities (Giddens 1979:73).

The issue of actors' knowledgeability in their accounts has received some recent attention. In terms of researching the structure-agency dynamic, attention has been drawn to the difficulties of people comprehending the structural dimensions that shape their lives. Structure can, at times, have a taken for granted quality that remains silent in narratives (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005). One empirical example of this can be seen in Brannen et. al. (2004:151) who found that the generation of fathers born in the 1970s and 1980s stressed their personal responsibility in creating their familial support, identity and lifestyle, compared to their own fathers and grandfathers. They did not remark upon the structural context that both aids and constrains their individual agency. Thus while I follow Giddens' point that social agents possess knowledgeability of the contexts in which they are situated, it would appear sensible to respect that it does have limitations.

Structure refers to the 'structuring property' which provides the binding of time and space in social systems. Structuring properties can be understood as rules and resources that are recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems (Giddens 1979:64):

> It is fundamental to affirm that *social systems are not constituted of roles but of (reproduced) practices*; and it is practices, not roles, which (via the duality of structure) have to be regarded as the 'points of articulation' between actors and structures.
>
> Giddens (1979:117 emphasis in original)

Therefore, structure is viewed as a property of social systems, which is carried in reproduced practices that are embedded in time and space (Giddens 1984:170).

Structure is not straightforwardly equated with constraint, rather, structure is both enabling and constraining. Each form of constraint is able to open up possibilities of action at the same time as they restrict others (Giddens 1984:173-174). In this light:

> The structural properties of social systems do not act or 'act on' anyone like forces of nature to 'compel' him or her to behave in any particular way.
>
> Giddens (1984:181)

Three forms of constraint are identified, firstly, 'material constraint' which derives from the character of the material world and from the physical being of the body. In these cases, the physical capacities of the human body and aspects of the physical environment place limits upon the feasible options open to an agent (Giddens 1984: 174-175). Secondly, '(negative) sanction', which captures constraint deriving from punitive responses from some actors towards others. Here, power is the source of constraint, although as power is a means of getting things done it also acts as an enablement, but the constraining aspects of power are experienced as sanctions which range from violence to mild expressions of disapproval (Giddens 1984:174) Finally, 'structural constraint', where constraint derives from the contextuality of action, for example,

from the given character of structural properties vis-à-vis situated actors (Giddens 1984:175-176). Structural constraint limits the range of options open to an actor in a given circumstance, however, the extent of constraint varies according to the context and nature of any given sequence of interaction. As with the other forms of constraint all structural properties of social systems are enabling as well as constraining (Giddens 1984:176-177).

To understand the nature of constraint we need to examine both the purposive and reasoning behaviour of agents and its interaction with the constraining and enabling features of the social and material contexts which that behaviour is situated in. However, the nature of constraint varies historically, as do the enabling aspects. Variations can occur in respect to the material and institutional circumstances of activity, but also in terms of the knowledgeability that agents' possess of their circumstances. Locating and identifying the sources of structural constraint is not the same as looking for law-governed conditions that place limits upon free action, as this merely produces 'reified discourse'. Rather, it draws our attention to the need to examine forms of discourse which treat courses of situated action as 'objectively given' in cases where individual actors do not perceive them as being produced and reproduced through human agency (Giddens 1984:179-180).

This discussion of Giddens has highlighted the nature of structure and agency in an overarching manner. However, to complement this understanding we turn to the ways in which empirical research which addresses work and care has conceptualised the structure-agency dynamic. One treatment of work and care can be seen in preference theory (Hakim, 2000a) which examines women's choices between family work and the labour market. In terms of structure and agency, preference theory stresses the role of agency in that heterogeneous personal preferences are an important determinant of women's labour market behaviour. Attitudes, values and preferences

have become increasingly important as the relative importance of economic and social-structural factors declines (Hakim 2000a:17). It is therefore asserted that actors' dispositions should be held to be a crucial aspect of all social processes (Hakim 2000a:13). This stance has been summarised as:

> At present, the emphasis in research on women's work and gender issues is on the sex-role prescriptions offered to women and on the situational constraints on their behaviour – on what they are *expected* to do and what they are *prevented* from doing, but never on what they *want* to do. One principle contribution of preference theory is to reinstate this third dimension, of women's personal preferences between alternative work-lifestyles.
>
> Hakim (2000a:14 emphasis in original)

Hakim (2000a:6) sets out women's work-lifestyle preferences as three ideal types. The first type are 'home-centred', which stands for around 20% of women. For home- centred women, their family and children remain their main priorities throughout their lives, and they prefer not to enter paid employment. The largest group of women – around 60% - are seen to be 'adaptive'. This is the most diverse group, including women who actively seek to combine paid work and motherhood alongside those with unplanned careers. Adaptive women want to work, it does not follow that they are fully committed to a career. The final group are 'work-centred' women, which represents approximately 20% of women. This group includes childless women and women whose main priority is paid employment or equivalent activities in the public sphere.

An exploratory outline of how preference theory applies to men is given (Hakim 2000a:255). Men do not make choices over work and lifestyle in the same way as they are for women, in that the majority of men are 'work-centred'. Therefore, in contrast to women, men are a more homogenous group. The smallest group of men, around 10% are 'family-centred', prioritising family and preferring not to engage in paid work. 'Adaptive' men accounts for about 30% of men, as with adaptive women, this is a diverse group for the same reasons given above. Finally,

the 'work-centred' orientation stands for approximately 60% of men. Whereas women's preferences are held to be realisable in terms of choosing their preferred work-lifestyle, men's preferences are not easily realisable as they have fewer options and choices than do women (Hakim 2000a:257). This is a curious argument – if men's choices are more constrained than women, is preference theory an appropriate lens with which to examine them? Furthermore, Hakim's arguments that women are relatively more able to make 'free choices' have proved to be controversial. Others have posited that choices are made from opportunities that are available and in light of perceived constraints. Available opportunities depend upon both individual characteristics, such as level of qualification, as well as opportunities within organisations and the labour market more generally (Crompton et. al. 2003). Therefore, decisions are not made in a vacuum; structural processes enter into 'the shaping of choices and the contours of what is deemed choosable...' (Irwin 2005:80).

In reconciling these positions in understanding choices made between work and care, I follow the approach outlined by Giddens that an analysis needs to take account of both structure and agency. Therefore, a more satisfactory account situates choices in the structural context that has both enabled and constrained that choice. This does not dispute that people make choices. In recent years there has been research that has treated choices not as free 'preferences' but as embedded in moral considerations and normative ideas about what is right for children. People's moral considerations and normative ideas vary, and it is this understanding which is able to offer a more dynamic approach to agency and structure (Williams 2004:61). Such an approach has been used to critique the underlying assumptions behind late 1990s New Labour Government policies which aimed to encourage family practices that were viewed as 'desirable'. It was implicitly assumed that people take individualistic, cost-benefit decisions to maximise their personal gain. This was labelled a 'rationality mistake' as people do not behave in such a manner

when making decisions about their moral economy. People make decisions with reference to morally and socially negotiated views about what behaviour is right and proper (Barlow and Duncan, 2000). This point is further demonstrated by the findings of a study on class-based differences in how mothers combine caring and paid employment. The class-based differences in mothering were found to present different mixtures of choice and constraint. The mothers made their decisions with reference to their 'gendered moral rationalities'. These were gendered in that they addressed ideas about mothering, moral as they provided answers about the correct path of action, and they were rationalities in that they provided a framework in which the decisions were taken. Mothers' gendered moral rationalities about childcare were found to be expressed along three main dimensions: firstly, how mothers' understood children's needs, how mothers' understood their own needs, and thirdly the balance between the two needs (Duncan, 2005). These approaches address choices over work and care, but they are approached as situated choices. However, these studies do not address fathers, and so the findings of a recent study are reported below.

A recent interview study of fathers in four ethnic groups (Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Black African, and White British) found that parents wanted to do the best for their children, but in doing this they had to reconcile economic, moral, social and personal dimensions (Hauari and Hollingsworth, 2009). Many factors that arose from fathers' current life circumstances influenced and shaped their behaviours and paternal involvement. A series of key constraints and enabling factors emerged in their analysis, with paid work a dominant consideration (Hauari and Hollingworth 2009:32-35). Five key constraints were identified. The first, as highlighted above was fathers' work and working hours which were cited by most fathers in their sample as a constraint. In particular, fathers working long and non-standard hours felt that they were not compatible with family life, as it limited their availability to children. Unemployment was seen

as another constraint in that they were unable to provide for families, and the resulting lack of money limited the activities that they could undertake with children. The third constraint was health status, as a few fathers in their sample were in poor health or were caring for an unwell partner. Fathers' ill-health links in with the previous constraint since it limits their ability to engage with the labour market. Another constraint reported by fathers was the age of children. In this respect, fathers were concerned that they spent little time with children during adolescence, as they had to compete with interests that took them away from their homes. The final constraint was the organisation of parenting roles within families with regard to enabling fathers to spend time with children.

Four enabling factors were also identified. The first was flexible working hours, either through fathers' self-employment which provided them with opportunities to arrange their working times, or through employers' flexible working arrangements. Fathers' unemployment was the second enabling factor, although this was also previously identified as a constraint. Fathers' time use diaries showed that unemployed fathers tended to report greater involvement in childcare activities and household activities than fathers in employment. The third enabling factor was financial provision, as fathers cited wealth as helping to free up more time to allow them to participate in family life. The final enabling factor was family support, in terms of fathers receiving support and encouragement from partners and extended family, which helps to facilitate paternal involvement.

Although this research is useful in terms of understanding smaller-scale constraints and enabling factors which fathers' negotiate, it does not include larger-scale factors, such as the way that fatherhood is bound up with institutions, embedded in law and shaped by policy (Hobson and Morgan, 2002). For example, the extent to which a state regulates the market can enable

employees to be less dependent upon market forces. The policy regime in which families are situated can vary in the extent to which the state provides benefits and services or relies upon families as a form of welfare and the degree to which the market is the source of benefits and services for families. There are further variations between countries in the policy incentives and disincentives which can reproduce a male breadwinner norm; this includes maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions. Men are also constructed as fathers through civil laws concerning marriage, divorce and custody. These accord fathers with rights, duties, responsibilities and statuses (Hobson and Morgan, 2002:9-11). However, there are gaps between law and policy and actual practice (Morgan 2002:273-274).

Concepts

This section develops concepts from the literature that are of relevance for this study. These concepts are not derived from theories, but are grounded in the findings of previous empirical studies in the research fields of fathering, care, household labour, families, and organisational research into flexible working arrangements. However, these concepts should be understood as complementing the two theories outlined above in their role of guiding this study.

Negotiation

The concept of negotiation was developed in research on kin relationships which explored how people worked out what to do to best support kin with whom they had built up commitments (Finch, 1989). Commitments between kin were found to have developed through negotiations in individual relationships but they were also situated within social and cultural contexts (Mason, 1996). Negotiation refers to the ways in which:

> ... the course of action which a person takes emerges out of his or her interaction with other people. People's behaviour cannot be explained by saying that someone is following a set of pre-ordained social rules... Nor is a person's behaviour explained

> straightforwardly by the position which he or she occupies in the social world... negotiation emphasises that individuals do have some room for manoeuvre, though it is never entirely open-ended and sometimes it can be quite tightly constrained.
> Finch and Mason (1993:60)

This treatment of negotiation processes resonates with the previous section in structure and agency in that individuals are able to exercise a degree of choice, but this occurs within constraints. Therefore, the concept of negotiation should be seen as a useful bridging concept between structure and agency.

Finch and Mason's research also alerts us to the possibility that different negotiation processes can apply to men and women around caring, particularly with regard to labour or time-intensive support. Women tended to be more firmly attached to sets of family responsibilities than men are, although there are variations for both men and women in how they treat these responsibilities (Finch and Mason 1993:79, 119, 165). In this study negotiation occurs between partners, and this has been captured in the concept of 'maternal gatekeeping' which is utilised here to aid understanding of the negotiations that occur within the domestic sphere. Maternal gatekeeping is a collection of beliefs and behaviours that ultimately inhibit sharing between women and men in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for the home and children. For example, some women may resist giving up their responsibilities for childcare and household tasks, as they perceive men as not possessing the skills to do so or as unwilling. However, gatekeeping is not restricted to mothers – fathers may also gatekeep various domains, roles, or identities which can restrict more equitable family work arrangements (Allen and Hawkins, 1999).

Negotiation in this study also applies to organisational contexts of action. This is with regard to fathers negotiating flexibility with their line managers, but also with their colleagues. Here negotiation alerts us to the importance of informal working practices and relationships. For

example, team working in self-managed teams can offer some scope for colleagues to negotiate flexibility, yet it can also be restrictive in that if time is spent away from work, overburdened colleagues have to cover the workload (Gambles et. al. 2006:50). Similar findings emerged from case study research based in two Swedish social work departments. There was a management strategy in place for work teams to largely organise workloads, within this if leave needs to be taken for care needs, this was negotiated with colleagues. This was interpreted as a strategy for managers to deny the importance of care in employees' everyday life. As the responsibility for these negotiations was moved lower down the organisation, it also prevented the more institutionalised and overarching rights around work-family boundaries being established. Instead, an alternative, informal value system emerged, which forced employees to balance individual and collective responsibility (Bäck-Wiklund and Plantin, 2007). Similarly, a study of an insurance company in the UK found that the use of teamworking under intense workloads shifted responsibility from managers to individuals and teams. In this context, individual feelings of responsibility towards team members emerged as a barrier to accessing flexible working practices, rather than the presence of supportive or unsupportive managers (Lewis and Smithson, 2009). Therefore, the application of work-family arrangements depends on organisational cultures and the potential for daily and informal negotiations within each workplace (das Dores Guerreiro and Pereira, 2007).

Family Practices

The term 'family practices' has been coined in place of 'the family' which is too static and obscures the current diversity amongst people's living arrangements (Morgan 1996:186-187). Family practices refers to sets of practices which address the ideas of parenthood, kinship and marriage and the expectations and obligations which are associated with these practices (Morgan 1996:11). The use of family practices conveys and plays upon the differences in the perspectives of the observed and the observer, so this is recognition is incorporated into resulting analysis.

Secondly, 'family practices' is used to bring a sense of the active, with its sense of doing and action. Thirdly, it carries the notion of the everyday, as practices are usually everyday occurrences to participants. Although they are aspects of daily life that are often taken-for-granted by social actors, their significance and meaning derives from wider systems of meaning. Related to the everyday-level is that the term practices has connotations of a sense of regularity, as the practices are not usually one-off events, they are repeated occurrences. However, practices are also characterised by their open-endedness. This brings the recognition that any set of practices will often be described in different ways. Therefore, describing a practice in one way does not preclude other descriptions. Finally, and highly relevant and complementary to the discussion that highlighted the need to retain both structure and agency in our understanding, is that the work of Mills (1959) is drawn upon to argue practices constitute the major links between history and biography. In this light, practices are historically constituted and shaped. Practices are also part of and created from aspects of an individual's biography (Morgan 1996:188).

Caring for Children as Expressed through Breadwinning

Palkowitz's (1997) expanded treatment of paternal involvement includes providing finances, in this way it becomes possible to recognise that a father working overtime may be doing so, so that they can be a good provider. The breadwinning or economic provisioning aspects of fathering has been a theme in previous research. In a study of fathers of adolescent children, it was found that fathers emphasised provisioning when they were asked about what was expected of fathers today. Furthermore, fathers' relationships with adolescent children were often mediated through the provisioning of material goods. Providing had taken on a special meaning for some fathers:

> It acted as a channel for their feelings of emotional attachment to their family and gave a sense of purpose to work which might otherwise be experienced as quite meaningless.
>
> Warin et. al. (1999:21)

The primacy of breadwinning for fathers is echoed in the findings of a recent study where fathers saw financial provisioning as their defining role. In particular, breadwinning was seen by fathers as a central part of their identity and contributed to their feelings of self worth (Hauari and Hollingsworth, 2009). The power of assumptions that link fathers to breadwinning was also detected amongst a Canadian study of primary caregiving fathers. The fathers experienced profound feelings that they should be earning (Doucet 2006:194). These fathers felt that they were being judged negatively for not earning and by implication, for having 'failed as a man' (Doucet 2006:209). Although breadwinning can be viewed an expression of care, we should also be wary of the vast cultural weight that is attached to this role for men.

Subjective Sense of Entitlement to Flexible Working Policies

Where organisations have developed flexible working policies, it should not be assumed that employees are able to straightforwardly access them. One barrier, which can restrict employees' take-up of flexible working arrangements, is their lack of 'subjective entitlement' to raise the need to alter working practices to address family needs. This leads to flexible working provisions being seen as 'perks', instead of a right which an employee can access. When this happens, employees have a restricted sense of entitlement to adapt work for family or other needs (Lewis, 1997). In this light, a distinction can be drawn between support that is expected and viewed as a right and those that are seen as favours to be negotiated and that may need to be reciprocated between colleagues (Lewis and Haas, 2005). A focus group study of young women and men in Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Ireland and the UK found that the sense of entitlement to employer support was highly gendered. Men in all countries had a much lower sense of entitlement than women to take up parental leave, and compared themselves to other men rather than with women (Lewis and Smithson, 2001).

In a comparative study of the UK, Netherlands and Norway men and women discussed their interpersonal and workplace tensions, conflicts and practical difficulties in combining multiple parts of their lives. Most men were reluctant to raise these issues with their managers as they felt it might be interpreted as a lack of commitment. Although there are some signs of change in more progressive organisations, men still risk being penalised if they try to adapt work for family needs (Gambles et. al. 2007). This resonates with wider research findings that managers have concerns about taking up flexible working arrangements as they worry that it may negatively impact upon their careers (Houston and Waumsley, 2003; Fagan, 2001a). Furthermore, a recent survey of parents of children aged under sixteen found that just under half of both men and women believed that asking for flexible working might show that they lack commitment (Ellison et al. 2009).

Summary

Care has been examined as a problematic concept warranting further exploration. Care is socially associated with women and gendered negotiations around time-intensive care. Conceptualisations of care have been considered such as the early distinction drawn between 'caring for' and 'caring about', and Tronto's later four-fold analysis. A feminist ethic of care is underpinned by a relational ontology which recognises the need for networks of care to be bolstered by institutional support. The diversity of caring contexts is stressed, and their embeddedness in concrete social practices in kin relationships. Autonomy is fostered through caring relationships. 'Relational autonomy' is recognised. Fathers' care has been focused upon to lead to an understanding of paternal involvement. Some models of paternal involvement have been introduced, but they have been critiqued as sterile and require further detailed expansion. Turning to theoretical treatments of fathering, the 'deficit paradigm' of fatherhood research has been replaced by an emphasis upon an ethic of generative fathering, which centres on fathers' obligations to children.

Concepts from structuration theory have been introduced, particularly the idea of the duality of structure which posits that structure and agency are mutually dependent. In this treatment, agency refers to our capabilities to achieve things, in which we utilise rules and available resources, and by doing so we reproduce structure. It is recognised that actors hold a degree of knowledgeability of the social systems that they are a part of, however, there are limits to the extent of the knowledge that actors are able to discursively construct. In terms of structure, it binds time and space, but the social system is also reproduced through people's use of rules and resources. However, structure is not equated with constraint, it is both enabling and constraining. To understand the nature of constraint, attention should be given to agents' reasons and their purposes and how these interact with the constraining and enabling aspects of their social and material contexts.

In outlining how the structure-agency dynamic has been approached in previous research on work and care, the primacy that is given to women and men's choice in preference theory has been rejected. It has been outlined how a more satisfactory approach understands choices around work and care by situating them in the contexts in which they are made. This is with respect to how contexts can both enable and constrain choices. Within this, moral considerations are also important, in terms of the normative ideas that underpin how people make decisions; this was seen in the concept of 'gendered moral rationalities'. Further research was introduced to understand specific constraining and enabling factors for father involvement and how these are situated within larger-scale contexts. These include welfare state and policy provisions that are provided for fathers. An additional four concepts were also outlined from the findings of empirical studies. These were: negotiation, family practices, caring for children as expressed through breadwinning, and subjective sense of entitlement to flexible working policies. These

are intended to complement the ideas from large-scale theories; by providing concepts are more specific to research, which addresses fathers' employment practices, care and household labour.

The theoretical issues that underpin this study have been elucidated. Earlier chapters have sketched the terrain for the way forward in this study, by reviewing the fields of literature concerning fathers' employment practices, experiences of care, and participation in domestic labour. The interviews with the key actors have also informed the understanding of the research area. We now move onto this thesis's specific focus and the crucial question of how it will be researched in the following chapter.

4.
Research Methods

Introduction

How will men's perspectives on work/life balance be researched in practice? To provide a focus on the objectives of this study, the three research questions that underpin this research will be introduced, along with a discussion of the data that each research question aims to generate. More specific research issues will be turned to, particularly the use of a qualitative research design and the strengths that this offers the study in addressing the research questions. The discussion also covers the more practical elements of how the research was undertaken, such as the ethics, access and the role of the gatekeepers, and the use of semi-structured interviews. Finally, there will be a discussion of data collection issues such as transcription, and data analysis.

Research Questions

This study is guided by three research questions, which serve to provide a focus on certain facets of work/life balance, a vast concept that can be examined from many differing perspectives. These three research questions are as follows:

1. What types of employment practices do men adopt which take account (or not) of fathering?

This question explores whether fathers take up any flexible working options, such as flexitime. Where fathers do make use of flexible working, their views on it will be sought. A particular focus will be how their use of flexible working plays 'in practice', in terms of their fathering practices and their specific organisational role and how this sits within the wider

organisational context. Instances where fathers do not take up flexible working are also addressed, which widens out this research question and enables comparisons between fathers who have access to and use flexible working, and those who do not. As with the fathers who utilise flexible working practices, fathers' views of their working hours will be sought, and whether the absence of flexible working influences their fathering practices. Links between fathers' workplace roles and the wider organisational culture will be made. In summary, this research question situates fathers in their organisational contexts. It will address both the enabling and constraining nature of the organisations that employ them and their working culture, and how fathers felt that they were able to negotiate flexibility within them.

2. How do fathers negotiate domestic labour?

Although the home is by no means the only part of 'life' in the work/life balance 'equation', it is clearly an important aspect of work/life balance. This research question will examine the domestic labour that fathers claim to undertake in the home, and following this, their views of the tasks that women undertake. It therefore studies men's thoughts and opinions on how they negotiate they participation in household labour in relation to their partners. Fathers' accounts will help to understand how their contribution to their households is both facilitated and constrained.

3. How do employed fathers negotiate childcare?

This research question builds upon the previous research question, by specifically focusing on how fathers negotiate their responsibilities for childcare. It explores how fathers engage with care, in terms of the ethics of care and previous conceptualisations of paternal involvement. Fathers' feelings about their participation in childcare are also addressed. The concept of negotiation in this research question addresses how fathers engage with care as

children develop and their needs change. Furthermore, this question is highly relevant to policy issues regarding the facilitation of men's further involvement in these areas.

Qualitative Research Design

The differing approaches to qualitative research share a similar philosophy of person-centeredness and to varying extents, an open-ended starting point and a search for meaning in participants' accounts and actions (Holloway and Todres, 2003:345). Qualitative research seeks to make visible the beliefs that social actors would otherwise take for granted (Scott 2004:91). It involves the detailed research of everyday life in its diverse social contexts. This has two major objectives. Firstly, to describe and analyse the processes through which social realities are constructed, and secondly, to research the social relationships which connect people to one another (Miller 1997:3). However, there is no one agreed position underlying all qualitative research (Silverman 1997:14). As there are competing conceptions within qualitative research concerning the nature of the social world and the ways in which we may know it, a central issue for the researcher is deciding where they locate themselves within these traditions of thought (Seale 1999:3).

It has been claimed that qualitative research can only deal with causes at the level of the intentional, self-directing and knowable individual (Hakim 2000b:10). From an interpretivist perspective, some degree of generalisation may be possible in qualitative research, although we need to be cautious, as there are limits to the generalisations that can be made. There may be evidence of shared experiences or underlying structures, but structures are so complex and as social agency may change them, the generalisations resulting from qualitative research can only be "moderate generalisations" (Williams 2002:132, 138). Despite these limitations, qualitative research methods are a strong resource in addressing research questions that seek a contextual

understanding of the social world (Snape and Spencer 2003:5). Particular features of this thesis topic lend themselves to this approach, since qualitative research is suited to topics that are ill-defined or poorly understood, and are deeply rooted within participants' personal knowledge or understandings (Ritchie 2003:32). The discussion in chapter two highlighted criticisms that have been made about the conceptual vagueness of work/life balance. This research will enable us to understand how fathers engage with flexible working in their specific organisational contexts, and how they negotiate childcare and domestic labour, through obtaining interview their accounts.

The 'Practicalities' of the Research

Piloting

The design of my interview schedule was guided by my three research questions so that I could gain data that would answer my questions and 'tap into' related themes. I consulted similar studies into work/care practices, domestic labour and fathering to see if they included their interview schedules. This provided me with useful insights about what approaches and questions have worked for other researchers. I piloted my interview schedule in Summer 2005 with three fathers who were employed in a local authority and one father who was employed in a health trust. I carried out an analysis to see which questions 'worked' and which needed further development before the main fieldwork began. The analysis of the pilot interviews also helped to highlight potential pathways for the main analysis. During the piloting, fathers were particularly vocal about their participation in childcare and their relationships with children. They would also discuss their employment, the nature of their working hours and how these impacted upon their work/life balance. However, I found that fathers were not so forthcoming with the section of the interview on domestic labour. As a result, I developed further prompts for the final interview

schedule[17]. These helped to draw more information from the fathers, to get them to consider housework more thoroughly, and also helped them to take this part of the interview more seriously.

Sampling Plan

The careful sampling of interview respondents is vital, as a well-selected sample should provide considerable insight into issues central to a study. There may not be strict requirements for a sample to be random, but it should still be chosen with as little bias as is possible, so that research findings mirror larger social trends, rather than the idiosyncrasies of a certain group (Gerson and Horowitz 2002:204-205). The number of interviewees in a sample is of importance, particularly as there is a danger in qualitative research for the sample to be either too large or too small, both of which have their own negative impacts upon the following analysis and end-product of the research findings. If an interview sample is too small, then it will not be possible to make limited generalisations or to test hypotheses of differences between social groups. On the other hand, should the sample be too large, it will not be practically possible to make any depth interpretations of the interviews (Kvale 1996:101).

In selecting a sample for this study, the consideration of the research questions has been vital, so that the sampling criteria leads to data that are able to provide answers for the research questions. The criteria for the interview sample is discussed here:

1. Sector of Fathers' Paid Employment

As the first research question examines the organisational context and how this enables and constrains fathers' work-life practices, it was crucial to sample fathers from their employers. The

[17] A copy of the interview schedule used in the main fieldwork can be found in Appendix Three.

discussion in chapter two of the findings of analyses of the three Work-life Balance Surveys and the Workplace Employment Relations Survey points to some differences in the availability of flexible working provisions between the private and public sectors. The public sector was found to have the greater availability of provisions, although it appeared that over time the gaps between the public and private sectors had narrowed. Therefore, in drawing fathers from organisations it was crucial that both the public and private sectors were covered, so that the study could address these potential differences, which led to the sampling of ten fathers from two public sector organisations (five from Urban Council and five from the Health Trust) and fourteen from two private sector employers (nine from the Car Parts Plant and five from Communications Co.). Sampling the fathers from four organisations offers the advantage to the research design of having four case studies, so that comparisons can be made between the fathers' work-life practices in the organisations.

It was originally intended that the primary consideration for the research design within each organisation was that the fathers selected to participate in the research would span the range of occupational classes employed in each organisation. This was originally why I had intended to approach larger employers, as their hierarchical structure would aid the recruitment of fathers drawn from different occupational classes, as opposed to approaching smaller employers with relatively 'flat' organisational structures. My original intention was to recruit fathers from both manual and non-manual occupations from across the organisations, so that a classed comparison could be made of fathers' work/life experiences. Here, the concept of social class was to have been operationalised by using the fathers' occupational groups as a proxy measure. The fathers were also asked questions at the start of each interview that would place them on the National Statistics Social-economic Scale (NS-SEC). However, when sampling the fathers from the four organisations I was not successful in securing fathers from both manual and non-manual

occupations. There were too few fathers employed in manual roles in my final sample to enable such a comparison to be made. However, in drawing fathers from four organisational case studies the data collected does offer an opportunity to examine fathers' work-life practices in their organisational contexts.

However, the sample does include a range of respondents' occupations. The five fathers sampled from the Local Authority are all in desk-based roles, but there is some differentiation in terms of grades, with two fathers being Principal Officers (Economic Strategy Officer and Principal Research Officer), a further two Senior Officers (Human Resources Officer and Communications Officer), and one father an Assistant Officer (Systems Development Assistant). The five Health Trust fathers include two fathers in clinical roles that are directly responsible for providing patient care (Consultant and Senior Staff Nurse and Practice Educator), and three fathers in desk-based roles that support the running of the organisation (two Senior Human Resources Advisors and an Assistant Directorate Accountant). All of the five fathers sampled from the Communications Company are in managerial roles with three fathers holding line management responsibilities for teams (Call Centre Manager, Business Centre Sales Manager, and Team Manager) and two who did not line manage (Marketing Manager and Business Manager). The nine fathers from the Car Parts Plant include one manager (Harness Manufacturing Services Manager), two in manual roles (Board Manufacturer and Works Team Leader) and six in design engineer roles (Senior Electrical Distribution System Technician, Design Engineer, Electrical Distribution System Engineer, Senior Development Engineer, Senior ADO Engineer, and Electrical Distribution System Engineer).

2. Fathers' household arrangements

The sample was constructed primarily of 22 fathers who were resident with female partners. This is needed for the second research question that addresses fathers' negotiation of the household division of labour, particularly how they negotiate the performance of chores with their partners. There needed to be a division of labour in the household so that such questions can be raised during the interviews. However, undertaking the literature review brought to my attention that research with lone fathers can also provide useful data on domestic labour. The studies by Barker (1994) and Fassinger (1993) demonstrate this with regard to fathers' learning domestic routines, particularly in light of their 'invisibility' (DeVault, 1991). In these cases, the absence of a division of labour between partners for two lone fathers in the sample (and an additional father who had been a lone father for nine years, but had since repartnered) was still able to provide useful insights into fathers' negotiations of domestic labour, particularly by means of providing a contrast with the partnered fathers.

3. Household Employment Strategies

The sample includes households that are in differing employment situations. Although all fathers worked full-time, five did so with formal flexitime and one father homeworked on occasions, but 18 fathers without the scope for daily flexibility were purposively included so that the sample lends itself to a comparison of whether (or not) fathers' securing of flexible working has any impact upon divisions of domestic labour and care. The sample was constructed to include fathers who have partners with a range of employment situations such as seven mothers who were working part-time, seven reduced hours, five full-time, one mother currently on maternity leave, one mother who was a student, and one mother not in paid employment. This sampling enables a comparison to be made of how partners' paid employment impacts upon fathers' care

and participation in domestic labour. Previous research suggests that when women are in part-time paid employment, men tend to help out in the home to a lesser extent than when women work full-time (Windebank 2001; Crompton and Harris 1999; Sullivan 2000).

4. Fathers and children's household arrangements

The ethics of care with its emphasis upon recognising and celebrating the diversity of caring contexts (Williams, 2004) has influenced my sampling approach. Accordingly, fathers in diverse relationships with children have been included. The sample includes 18 fathers who resided with a partner and children, as well as two stepfathers who resided with partners and children, one adoptive father, one repartnered father, and two lone fathers who reside with their children. This diverse approach mirrors that of Henwood and Procter (2003) who did not want their sampling strategy to make normative assumptions about fathers by restricting their research with fathers who were resident with both their partners and biological children. In light of addressing my research questions, these fathers all negotiate paid employment and care on a daily basis.

5. Age of children

The sample included fathers who have children aged under eighteen. This was further split according to the age-range of children that fathers had. Eight fathers had pre-school children between infancy and four years, twelve fathers had primary-school aged children (five to 11 years), and ten fathers had secondary school-aged children and adolescents (12-18 years). This provides data on how fathers engage with care and what kinds of care they undertake at various points of childhood and adolescence. This has the advantage of gathering a range of insights about the nature of fathers' relationships with children to address the research question on how fathers negotiate care. Interviewing fathers of older children offered the opportunity to get the men to reflect upon how their involvement has changed in line with children's development,

whereas the interviews with fathers of younger children were able to address how these fathers anticipated their future relationships with children as well as how they have relatively recently adapted to care. Children's differing care needs and the nature of fathers' relationships with them at different stages in their development may impact upon their work/life practices and the nature of flexibility that they may require from employers. Furthermore, the review in chapter two pointed to a lacuna in the existing research literature on fathers and care, which is the lack of attention paid to how fathers negotiate care with adolescents.

Research Access

This section discusses the negotiations over research access in the four organisations which the fathers were sampled from. My research access negotiations are discussed here since access is not just a theoretical issue; rather the strategies used to gain access hold implications for the research, the researcher and the research process (Burgess, 1984). After the piloting during summer, 2005, I began negotiating access for my main fieldwork during autumn, 2005. Securing access with the two public sector organisations was relatively straightforward – here I had contacts through my supervisor which enabled me to write initial letters to approach the issue of access. These letters were printed out on Cardiff University-headed paper as I reasoned that this would help to give my letter and request for research access a greater degree of credibility. I telephoned these contacts a few days after receipt of their letters[18] to arrange to meet to explain my research, sampling requirements, the confidentiality and ethics. The gatekeeper in the first public sector employer, *Urban Council* was suggested to me by my supervisor as being able to help me obtain access. It was felt that they would be interested in my research as they were employed in an equalities team and they were also, at the time, studying on a postgraduate course in the department. When I met with this gatekeeper to discuss my research

[18] A copy of a speculative access letter can be seen in Appendix Four.

and sampling requirements for the fathers, they were very keen that the sample that I obtained from them should be a diverse group of fathers with different family circumstances. Their interest here was that their flexible working policies should cater for fathers' different care requirements, and not just those of partnered fathers. As I wanted to recruit fathers who were lone parents, stepfathers, and repartnered fathers, the stance of this gatekeeper towards my study proved to be fruitful, as they were able to help me find these fathers for my study. However, in another sense my access to the fathers was constrained to those that the gatekeeper was able to gain access to relatively easily in the large organisation. The fathers in my sample were either known to my gatekeeper personally through their role with the Council or known to her colleagues who she had discussed my research with and had suggested fathers that would be suitable to approach. As a result, all of the fathers were in desk-based roles, which does not reflect the range of occupations that the Council employed. I did raise with the gatekeeper that I would like to interview a small group of fathers who were in manual roles, such as maintenance workers. At one time it looked as if I might be able to obtain access to some fathers in the parks and recreation department, but there were issues with fitting my interviews in with their work time, and so my access was not secured. Thus, the gatekeeper in the local authority was able to facilitate my access to a diverse group of fathers in terms of the family situations, but not in terms of their employment roles.

For the second public sector organisation, the *Health Trust*, my initial meeting to explain my research was held with a staff member who worked in an equalities team. As with the Urban Council my supervisor knew this contact and they were suggested to me as someone who would be supportive of my research. When the meeting was arranged, my original contact had had to cancel at the last minute due to other work commitments that came up. However, I was able to meet with a colleague instead who worked in the same equalities team, and fortunately they were

also very interested in my research and keen to help with finding my sample of fathers. They felt that the person best able to help me secure my access was the Trust's Work/life Balance Co-ordinator, as they would have the operational experience with the flexible working arrangements available and the formal policies behind them. This contact was able to get the Work-life Balance Co-ordinator to agree to help me with finding the fathers, and I was provided with their contact details. The next day I received an email from the Co-ordinator, they were keen to help me with my research, and I arranged a meeting with her for the next day. In the meeting, the gatekeeper talked me through the different flexible working arrangements that were available, which provided me with some useful background information, and I explained my sampling requirements. The gatekeeper felt that the most straightforward way to find my sample would be for her to ask around her colleagues to identify suitable fathers, but also to approach some fathers on a database that was held on employees' take-up of the various flexible working arrangements. Through my gatekeeper's use of this database, I was able to find an interview a father who had taken parental leave and was planning to use more, as well as a father who had taken a period of special leave for childcare purposes. This gatekeeper was helpful in that they found me these fathers who were using these arrangements and those that they knew through work, who worked flexitime, but I have some reservations over how typical these fathers are amongst those employed in the Health Trust in that they had made contact with her in taking up flexible working arrangements.

In contrast, I found gaining access to two private sector employers problematic. I initially approached an insurance company which had a good reputation for staff initiatives. As I had anticipated having some access difficulties with private sector employers, I felt it was important to choose an employer with a good record, as they were more likely to agree to participate. This

company were keen initially and one father came forward of his own will to be interviewed, yet they were not willing to help me find further respondents.

At this time I also approached a local office of a large law firm. I had a contact in this firm which I thought might help to secure access. I was keen to study a law firm as I anticipated that they might have a long-hours working culture. After my initial contact, my research access request was passed to human resources. The representative felt that the subject matter was 'too private' and had concerns about confidentiality. I reassured them of the confidentiality of my research and that my study had been approved by the School's Research Ethics Committee and that I adhered to the BSA's ethical code. I drew upon the piloting and early interviews to point out that the fathers I had already interviewed felt that it was a positive experience and that they were pleased to 'have a say' about their experiences. However, in the meantime my boyfriend was offered employment at this law firm and so I decided that it was not ethically correct to continue access negotiations with this firm. I continued to approach other private sector employers with not much success.

I managed to secure access to one private sector employer by a 'happy coincidence'. During one of my key actor interviews with a workers' organisation, I mentioned my access difficulties with private sector employers. The contact offered her help with this, for which I am grateful. She suggested that a manufacturing company who she had been working with on a pilot of a work-based learning initiative would be open to participating in my research, as she was struck their openness in working with them. They had also had experience of having researchers in their workplace as the work-based learning pilot had recently had some external evaluators in to report in it. At the time of my research, this report was being finalised. This worked in my favour as the Manager of the *Car Parts Plant* had some familiarity with the research process, and had

had good working relationships with the evaluators that had been in. However, my contact in the workers' organisation acknowledged that because of the work-based learning initiative that was taking place that they were not a typical private sector employer. This reflects concerns that are held in organisational research more broadly, that the refusal of some organisations to grant access and the agreement of others potentially has consequences for the representativeness of the resulting research findings (Bryman, 1989). Although I shared these reservations, I felt that this was still a fruitful employer to carry out my research with. A few days after my meeting with the workers' organisation representative, they had arranged my access to the car parts plant. This contact had explained the nature of my research and the manager was pleased to help me find a sample of fathers to interview. I phoned the Plant Manager to explain my sampling needs and then emailed him a copy of the criteria. This manager had spoken informally with the fathers on the site who because it was relatively small, he knew them all personally. The manager was able to provide me with a sample of fathers who had different ages of children, and varying family arrangements (although this was to a lesser extent than in the fathers recruited to the sample through my gatekeeper in the Council). However, the literature on negotiating access in organisational contexts had alerted me to the potential dangers of negotiating access through gatekeepers in management positions. The issue here is that the researcher may face suspicion from employees about the 'true' aims of their research (Bryman, 1989). I was also concerned that the fathers did not feel that they had to take part since their manager approached them. To help overcome these difficulties I stressed that my research was confidential and that the data would be anonymised, and that as a researcher I was independent from their employer. Furthermore, I obtained informed consent from each father (as I had done before all of the interviews) and I took care to stress to them that their participation in my study was voluntary. This reflects that research access is not a one-off; rather it is subject re-negotiation with each participant in the research (Bryman, 1989).

When finding my final private sector employer, I reflected about which access strategies were successful and decided to approach the fourth organisation as I had a contact that was able to explain aims of my research and encourage management to find research participants. This gatekeeper worked in an office that supported the senior management of the *Communications Company*, therefore they were able to introduce my research to them and obtain their agreement for them to support it. This gatekeeper had worked with this employer for most of his working life and had built up his experience in different parts of the organisation, which had the advantage that he was able to help me find fathers from different roles with different operational requirements. This gatekeeper was of the view that fathers take-up of flexible working in this particular organisation was not typical, so in contrast to the Health Trust, the fathers that I sampled here were not working flexibly, apart from one father.

Sample and Fathers' Employers

Twenty-four interviews[19] were carried out with a sample of fathers of children aged under eighteen[20]. These interviews were split across four different workplaces, all located in South Wales. The first employer was *Urban Council,* a large local authority employing just over 18,000 staff. Urban Council had a range of work/life balance policies although these were subject to a minimum term of staff service of six months. The flexible working policies were drawn up by staff working in an equalities team, and were viewed by these staff as aiding gender equality in the organisation. However, there was also a strong awareness that flexible working arrangements had a wider applicability, particularly with regard to staff that needed time off for

[19] Further details of my sample can be found in the table in Appendix Five.

[20] It was specified during the access stage and to workplace intermediaries when recruiting participants that the fathers should have children aged under eighteen years of age. In practice, all of the fathers in the sample did have children aged under eighteen but a small group of four fathers also had children who were aged over eighteen. One father had younger children in subsequent relationships. Nevertheless, these interviews were insightful, particularly as I could introduce questions about whether they felt there had been any significant cultural changes between the births and upbringings of their older and younger children.

religious festivals and related commitments. They also had an onsite nursery in their largest office. The nursery was popular with employees, with a long waiting list for places.

The second public sector employer was *Health Trust,* another large employer with a number of different sites numbering 13,500 employees. As with Urban Council, flexible working arrangements were advertised to employees via payslips. This was felt to be the most effective way to promote the arrangements since they reasoned that people would read leaflets that came with their payslips. This strategy was taken to help overcome what was seen as a lack of awareness of the availability of flexible working arrangements amongst staff. There were formal flexible working policies in place which were developed by the Trust's Work/life Balance Co-ordinator, who was situated in a human resources team. The Coordinator monitored the take-up of flexible working amongst staff. The Trust also had workplace nurseries located at two of their largest sites. In addition, an employer-subsidised childcare voucher scheme was available to employees to help with childcare costs.

The third employer was *Communications Co.* a nationwide communications company that is also a large employer. The research was carried out at their regional office in South Wales. There are provisions for flexible working, which were backed up by formal policies. In contrast to the two public sector organisations, the main strategy for disseminating the flexible working arrangements on offer was to place the policies on the staff intranet, which it was assumed that staff could then browse if they were interested in flexible working. As with the Health Trust, a Work/life Balance Coordinator was employed, although they were not situated in this location, but at another office approximately 100 miles away. Securing flexible working in this organisation was seen as being dependent on whether a particular job can be adapted; for some workers therefore, there was a lack of flexibility.

The final employer is *Car Parts Plant*; this is a plant that is located outside a South Wales town. It is the smallest workplace site in the study with just over one hundred staff at the time of the fieldwork, although it was part of a large multinational corporation. In contrast to the three previous employers, Car Parts had no formal flexible working policies; although they did allow fathers to take three days of paid paternity leave long before it was made a legal entitlement in 2003. However, the lack of formal policies did not mean that there was no scope amongst employees to have some degree of flexibility; it did mean that arrangements were made an unofficial basis with the Plant Manager.

The length of the interviews varied. The interviews with fathers employed in the public sector tended to last longer, between an hour and an hour and a half. These fathers tended to schedule in their interview as a meeting and were able to set aside the time in their working day. The private sector fathers' interviews – with both the managers and manual fathers - were shorter. As I had anticipated and experienced access difficulties with these employers, I felt that they would be more likely to agree to participating in my research if my interviews were as least disruptive to fathers' working days as possible. As these fathers were assigned less time for their interviews they lasted around three-quarters of an hour to an hour.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The principle method of data collection in this study is the semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews combine both more structured parts and less structured aspects. In the less structured parts, the respondent has the freedom to do most of the talking and provide explanations, whilst in the more structured segments; more specific questions obtain detail, examples and context (Rubin and Rubin 1995:5-6). They therefore provide the researcher with a

degree of flexibility in the interview situation. Fathers may have differing experiences, so it is important to let them talk in the interviews about their own concerns in a more open-ended manner. Interviews enable the researcher to collect descriptions of interviewees' lived worlds and their interpretations of the meaning of the phenomena under study (Kvale 1996:30). This study has a focus on men's negotiations of both domestic labour and childcare, and so interviewing is clearly a suitable method since it provides an opportunity to explore their points of view (Miller and Glassner 1997:100). More specific questioning aids the data analysis in that comparisons can be made between interviews.

The interview has been a basic information-gathering tool of the social sciences for a century. The use of interviewing is not confined to the social sciences; increasingly the media and health service workers also gain their information about society from interviews. This has occurred to such an extent that it has been argued that we have become an "interview society" (Denzin 2001:23). In this climate there has been a widespread, and possibly an uncritical use of interview-based research and an unreflecting support of the central assumptions of the interview society. This argument forces researchers to scrutinise their choice of the interview method and to recognise that the resulting data are not necessarily a particularly authentic mode of social representation (Atkinson and Silverman 1997:4-5).

However, such perspectives, if carried too far, in my opinion, undermine the status of interview research. As a researcher, I am using interviews as a method to provide insight into fathers' negotiations of paid employment, care and domestic labour, something that I certainly view as a very real social process. These criticisms of the interview method need to be acknowledged; to view it as a straightforward means of data collection would be naïve, but on the other hand, if carried to an extreme, the conclusion would be to present interview research as a pointless

activity. Some kind of balance needs to be struck here. It appears that I am not alone in this conviction, as another interview researcher asks:

> Are the data to be regarded as straight accounts of the interviewees 'experiences' or stories about that experience told as an exercise in self-presentation by the interviewee? Here lurks the temptation to abandon the enterprise on the grounds that it is impossible to determine the status of the data. However, if we allow all possible objections to cause us to doubt the status and utility of the data, the chances are that we would not undertake research at all...
>
> Melia (1997:30)

One approach to help to overcome these difficulties faced by interviewer researchers is to compare the interview to other potential methods that could have been utilised. Alternative methods for this research would be questionnaires or structured interviews. It is generally held that interviewees' views are more likely to be shared in a relatively open interview than in a more standardised interview or questionnaire, both of which obscure the interviewees' views (Flick 2002:74-92).

The interviewee's account produced within the interview is viewed as an act of "creation" (Byrne 2003:30). Although the interview accounts are "co-constructed", the interviewer does appear to be absent in these considerations, which fail to acknowledge that that the interviewer is central in the production of talk. In the interview, both the interviewer and the interviewee seek to construct themselves as a specific type-of-person in relation to the interview topic and the interview itself (Rapley, 2001:303). This involves turn-taking, in which the interviewer presents topics and the interviewee responds by seeking to produce acceptable answers (Dingwall 1997:58-59). It is a unique collaboration that the researcher frames, but it still becomes the interviewee's story (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004:6). An emphasis upon the interview as a "performance event" recognises that in interviews, information is transformed into a shared experience between the interviewee and the interviewer (Denzin 2001:24). This focuses upon

speech, as does qualitative research in general, but it must be acknowledged that what is not said within the interview may be just as telling as what is actually said. Silences in interviews can be profoundly meaningful (Poland and Pederson 1998:293).

The questions that are asked within the interview are of vital importance if we accept that interviews are co-produced by both the researched and the researcher. Questions were framed in terms of specifics rather than generalities, as the way in which people make sense of the social world is grounded in their day-to-day experiences. This therefore requires interviewers to be flexible and contextually sensitive in their questioning, rather than depending upon a sequence of questions that is fixed before the interview occurs (Mason 2002:227-228, 231). Accordingly, the interview topic guide was used to steer discussion, but not to prescribe what is said (Arthur and Nazroo 2003:115). This approach is more sophisticated than the conventional view that if questions are asked properly, then the interviewee will provide the appropriate information. Rather, the resulting knowledge is created through the actions used to get at it (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:113-114).

Building rapport helps in research situations where there are social differences between the researcher and the researched, as is the case in this study. Rapport involves establishing trust, expressing genuine interest in the respondent's experiences, assuring confidentiality, a non-judgmental stance, and crucially making the respondent feel comfortable enough to talk to provide insights into their social worlds (Miller and Glassner 1997:106-107).

In this research, I am presented with issues associated with gender, since there is a strong consensus within qualitative interviewing that women interviewing men can present problems related to interpersonal dominance (C.A.B. Warren, 2002). Care needs to be taken though, since

the status of a respondent can inter-mesh with their gender (Scott 1984:17). Although men's behaviour is diverse and dependent upon the specific context of each interview, it may be patterned in an attempt to display conventional hegemonic masculinity (Foster 1994:90). These issues are related to the identities of the researcher, and need to be carefully balanced in the interview situation. The traditional roles that women are often assigned to can mean that they are perceived as harmless and unthreatening in the field, which may mean that participants may share the type of information that they would not provide to a male researcher (Horn 1997:299-300). Rather than approaching these considerations as potential pitfalls in collecting data, they can be viewed as an intrinsic part of the data and its value (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2002:203-204, 207). Others have argued that this treatment is problematic, since it is difficult to know exactly how the interviewee's perceptions of gender influences the interview (Padfield and Proctor 1996:346).

A few fathers asked me whether I had children myself; one commented that I should not spend too much time at his family-friendly workplace as parenting was catching. However, I felt that due to my age and educational status as a PhD student most fathers felt that I did not have children. This meant that I was able to ask rather naïve questions about fathers' care and their work/life balance, as I had no experience of caring for children. I felt able to probe more deeply, and possibly ask questions they possibly might have felt were simplistic.

I was also asked by a few fathers where I was from. Two fathers had assumed that I was from the South Wales town where I was carrying out their interviews, as whilst arranging the interviews they suggested that I could interview them at their place of work, which was convenient as I (then) lived close by. One father who was English asked me what part of Suffolk I was from, but he was unfamiliar with the particular town where I grew up. Another father, when finding out

that at the time of interview that I had been resident in Wales for six years explained that was sufficient time to represent Wales in terms of sport. None of the Plant fathers asked where I was from. As these interviews were carried out away from Cardiff, I assumed that my English accent was more noticeable and so they did not feel the need to enquire.

Research Ethics

Ethical issues emerge during all stages of research endeavour, so there is no sense in which this discussion is "tidying away" these crucial issues. An ethical awareness requires ongoing reflection and responses (Shaw 2003:23). The formal code of ethics that this study adheres to is the British Sociological Association's (1994) *Statement of Ethical Practice,* and this provides a good starting point for anticipating what dilemmas may emerge. As with other professional ethical codes, these do not provide definite straightforward answers since they require interpretation on the part of the researcher (Kvale 1996:110). The formal approval of my research by the School of Social Sciences' Research Ethics Committee required that I anticipate ethical issues prior to the commencement of their approval and my fieldwork[21].

Should potential participants choose to participate, it is often difficult for them to anticipate how their participation can be time-consuming, intellectually and emotionally demanding, as well as potentially threatening their right to privacy (McCracken 1988:27). Carrying out interviews is a privilege that is granted to the researcher, rather than being a right that the researcher has (Denzin 2001:23). Even when participation has been agreed, any research topic may have the potential to become a sensitive topic for the participant (Corbin and Morse 2003:337).

[21] Copies of my application to the School of Social Sciences' Research Ethics Committee can be seen in Appendix One.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before their interviews[22]. As this study was carried out in businesses and organisations, arrangements for the interviews were made beforehand with managers, but ultimately; informed consent was obtained from the respondents themselves (Lewis 2003:67). In the time before the interview the research was explained to all participants, and an opportunity was provided for participants to ask questions concerning any aspect of the research. The purpose of informed consent is to protect research participants, to inform them of the possibility of harm in advance, and inviting them to withdraw from the research at any time if they so wish (Fine et. al. 2000:113). However, informed consent within qualitative research carries its own dangers. The principle of informed consent tends to assume that the researcher knows beforehand about what will occur during the course of the research, and the possible effects of such occurrences. In practice, some participants may be less sophisticated than others in raising ethical issues that concern them to the researcher (Shaw 2003:15). The researcher's understanding of the research may not necessarily be the same as the understandings of participants, or it may shift over time (C.A.B. Warren 2002:89). The researcher must recognise that respondents have the right of silence in interviews. As there is a strong emphasis on collecting speech in interviews, there are ethical dangers in forcing the interviewee out of silences, for example there may be painful experiences that they do not feel comfortable in discussing (Poland and Pederson 1998).

Interview Locations

Consideration of interview locations may seem to be a relatively unproblematic issue of research design. However, it does need considerable thought and attention, as the location of the interview has serious implications for the research. This is based upon an awareness that the site of the

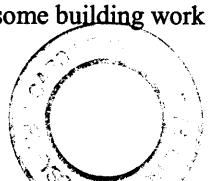
[22] Initial email contact with participants stressed the voluntary nature of their participation in this study. Prior to the interview, I gave the fathers an informed consent form to sign which explained the research and offered them an opportunity to obtain a copy of the resulting transcript which they could comment on or amend before returning to me. A copy of the initial email and the informed consent form can be seen in Appendix Two.

interview embodies spatial relations and meanings which build the power and personality of research participants' relationships with the people, places and interactions that are discussed in interviews (Elwood and Martin 2000:649). The interviews were carried out in the fathers' places of work, as the research access was gained through their employers. A potential drawback with interviewing the fathers at work was that they may have had some concerns about the confidentiality of the interviews and so have felt less able to raise any concern they had about their work/life balance. However, I reminded participants of the confidentiality of the research and the voluntary nature of participation whilst approaching them to take part and further reminded them when I was gaining their informed consent before the interviews started. The informed consent form detailed how the data would be anonymised and that the fathers were welcome to have a copy of the resulting transcript. Only two of the fathers requested a copy of their transcripts and both were returned to me without any comments. In carrying out the interviews at the fathers' workplaces, I advised the fathers that we would ideally need to meet in a separate meeting room so that they were more able to talk freely. All but three interviews were carried out in this way[23]. Despite these concerns fathers did make points about the benefits of their employment and possible areas that their employers could improve.

Data Recording

Most interviews were tape-recorded. It was made clear to participants that if they felt uncomfortable either from the outset, or at any stage in the interview with the presence of the recorder, that they were free not to have the interview recorded in this way. Three fathers did not

[23] One of the local authority fathers had booked a meeting room but the meeting that took place prior to our booking had run over and so we carried out the interview at his desk within the earshot of one young male colleague. I believe that this impacted on the interview, particularly when the father was discussing his avoidance of domestic labour tasks. Somewhat frustratingly I wonder whether this section of the interview would have been different if the interview would have been carried out with more privacy.
Two more of the local authority fathers' interviews were conducted outside of their work on a picnic bench. They had kindly booked a meeting room but they felt it would be uncomfortably hot to carry out their interviews there as the air conditioning had broken. Since both of these interviews were outside in an area with some building work nearby I felt that it would be better to take notes rather than tape-recording.



want their interviews to be tape-recorded. I took thorough notes at the time of the interview and typed them up in full once I returned home when I had a fresh memory of the interviews. The overwhelming advantage of tape-recording interviews is that it provides a verbatim record of the event. This is desirable since memory does not remember what is seen and heard in its original entirety (Johnson 2002:111). The interviewer is freed from copious note-taking, and so is able to devote more time to the respondent and the interactional elements of the interview. It enables the interviewer to use their efforts more on careful elicitation and the general reactions from a respondent (Bucher et. al. 2003:4-5). It is generally conceded that the use of a tape-recorder affects the following conversation and creates a particular context for what is said. Interviewees have a tendency to make "on and off record" associations with the recording process. Equal attention is given to the unrecorded data, as it is regarded as just as important as that which is recorded in the interview (C.A.B. Warren 2002:91-92). There are certain advantages in tape-recoding interviews. The presence of the tape recorder forces respondents to be more explicit in how they express themselves, since the nods and other facial gestures that may be seen as answers in everyday interaction are no longer enough (Warren et. al. 2003:97).

Transcription and Interview Data Analysis

The quality of recordings and resulting transcripts has important implications for the reliability of research (Peräkylä 1997:203). Transcription can be understood as the contextualisation of speech (Mishler 1993:14). Theoretical and methodological issues associated with transcription have tended to be overlooked. We cannot assume that transcriptions are transparent, direct reflection of actual interaction (Lapadat and Lindsay 1999:65). Interview transcription is problematic, as a transcript is not a truthful replication of an objective reality. Transcribing involves extensive interpretative and analytical processes, which influence the following data analysis and findings (Tilley 2003:751, 760). One aspect of transcription requiring attention in

every study is data anonymisation. Names, spatial and temporal references that could potentially identify respondents have been removed or altered (Flick, 2002) in the resulting transcripts. I transcribed each interview as soon as possible after they had occurred. As I typed each interview up in full, I made some initial notes upon sections of the data that intrigued me in a separate file. I found that the process of transcribing each interview helped with data familiarity.

The development and use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (hereafter CAQDAS) has prompted vast debates amongst qualitative researchers. This stands in contrast to the uses of information technologies that support writing, data collection and literature searches (Fielding 2002:161) and which have benefited this thesis. A major advantage of CAQDAS is that it offers features that make analysis more transparent, particularly since qualitative research has been criticised in the past for its vagueness in this area. Another benefit is that many researchers have found that these applications have made highly effective data management tools (Fielding 2001:453). This consideration initially prompted my consideration of CAQDAS as I am (at the best of times) an untidy person. I did not feel that a paper-based analysis would work for me with the large volume of data that I was collecting, particularly when I wanted to retrieve data. I read some of the literature on CAQDAS to familiarise myself with the different types of programmes. I was struck by the range of choice, but I found Weitzman and Miles (1995) invaluable in helping me to choose a programme that matched my analytical requirements. I decided that I would try demonstration versions of NVivo, NUDIST, and Atlas/ti. I disliked the format of Atlas/ti. NUDIST would have been a good option if the data did not have to be coded line-by-line as the smallest unit of analysis. This felt artificial and I preferred NVivo's greater coding flexibility.

In approaching analysis, it is an important initial question to ask myself what status do I accord to this data, does it provide me with direct access to experiences or is it an actively constructed narrative (Silverman, 2001)? If reflexivity is overlooked during analysis, this will ultimately lead to a naïve reading of the data. Rather than assuming that interview accounts are descriptions of some 'real' world, accounts need to be viewed as socially situated events. The resulting interview accounts were produced from interactions between speakers in the interview situation (Roulston 2001:280, 285). This allows an acknowledgement that data are not merely collected, rather they are produced. The process by which data are produced is related to the end-product of the data (May 2002:1).

In outlining my approach to analysis, I am aware that there is no standardized process, no one 'right' way to analyse qualitative data (Tesch, 1990). This may have complicated my task, but it has only made it more creative, as I have engaged with the analysis texts in order to find 'my own way through'. This is possible, if we view the range of approaches as not only contrasting, but also complementary (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In looking at qualitative analysis in a general overarching way, the work of Tesch (1990) provided strong insights. Her discussion of the processes of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation evoke strong imagery of what analysis entails. De-contextualisation is the first analytical task, where relevant sections of data are separated from their original context. Data segments are then re-contextualised, where they are placed together with all of the other data extracts forming the same code. This is re-contextualisation as the code provides the new context for data segments (Tesch, 1990). An emphasis on taking account of the data's context is vital since we can better understand the meaning of the data. It helps to guard against potentially dangerous misinterpretation of the data (Dey, 1993).

My first stage was to read each transcript through a few times so that I had got a 'feel' for it as a whole. Reading is not passive; it is 'interactive', as reading prepares the ground for analysis. A number of techniques were used for interactive reading, I have asked 'who? What? When? Where? Why?' and 'so what?' questions with my data. Caution was taken here, as we should be wary of our first impressions, they must be developed further in a rigorous way to see if they still stand (Dey, 1993). The ideas that I gained through reading my data were recorded as memos, so that I could turn to them at later points. In this stage the data were made sense of, and this is needed before we can begin to understand what is central and peripheral in analysis (Wolcott, 1994).

My next stage was to move on from my initial impressions to organising the data (Tesch, 1990). This involves data management, since data that relate to a topic are not clustered together, so that segments of data that share a common theme will need to be located (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Categories are created with and from the data, a process referred to as 'coding' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) or 'categorisation' (Dey, 1993). Whilst carrying out the analysis on NVivo, I made notes on each node and code from each tree node. I further annotated intriguing bits of data and developed themes through writing analytic memos that I attached to segments of data on NVivo. I found the analytic memos an invaluable feature to make links between interviews. Writing memos helped to make me feel comfortable writing about my data and provided me with a safe space to comment upon emerging insights. This helped to bridge a divide between the analysis and writing up. A difficulty I experienced in categorising data was that at times it did feel artificial. This was overcome by not forcing categorisation, so that borderline cases were allowed for. As categories may overlap, they can be seen as 'fuzzy categories' (Tesch, 1990). Some categories did not work out, and this is an inevitable part of the coding process, and they were abandoned, changed or re-named. Once a tree node of categories was created, a series of

subcategories, or parent and child nodes were devised. These are more detailed categories embedded within general categories (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Assigned subcategories must not become detail for the sake of detail, rather, they were only created if they related to or illuminated conceptual concerns (Dey, 1993).

Summary

The three research questions that were foreshadowed in the introduction have been outlined in more detail to the reader. We have seen just what qualitative research design can bring to this study, along with what it may not be able to deliver. Semi-structured interviews were considered in a similar vein. As a method, a strength that they are able to offer is a degree of flexibility in the interview situation and providing rich accounts of interviewees' experiences. However, there are critiques of interviews, particularly concerning the status that is accorded to the resulting data. It should be remembered that the data are shaped by the interactions that took place in the interviews, particularly the influence that my gender may have had on the accounts offered by fathers. Whilst these have been reflected upon, semi-structured interviews still have considerable strengths in the context of this study, in terms of gathering fathers' accounts of how they negotiate paid employment, care, and domestic labour, particularly how they understand contextual influences as enabling and constraining their practices. This connects with a central theoretical concern of this thesis – the structure-agency dynamic. Ethical issues have been discussed in this chapter, although ethics still have ramifications at every stage of this study and beyond. The sampling criteria has been explained and justified. This has involved considerable planning, as opposed to being merely 'haphazard' in its design. Other 'practicalities' have also been treated, such as research access and the role of the gatekeepers, tape-recording interviews and data transcription and analysis.

5.
Fathers' Flexible Working Practices and Organisational Contexts

Introduction

The terrain of guiding theories and concepts, previous empirical insights and methodological considerations has been reviewed, and we now move forward to the first results chapter. The findings of the analysis for the first research question are addressed. This asked what types of employment practices do men adopt which take account (or not) of fathering? This includes considerations of whether fathers take up flexible working arrangements, as well as fathers who do not have flexible working available. In both cases, fathers' views of their working hours will be addressed, and the ways in which they are enabled and constrained in negotiating flexibility within their organisational cultures. The sample of fathers was drawn from four different employers, two public sector and two private sector, and fathers were from a variety of occupations. This chapter sets out the findings in turn for each employer. For each of the employers it is seen whether or not they offer formal and informal flexible arrangements, whether fathers access arrangements and how this impacts upon their everyday experiences. The type of leave that fathers may take, the frequency with which it is taken and for what caring needs is discussed for each employer. Findings with regard to fathers' paternity leave are also presented, although caution is needed as the sample includes fathers of adolescents as well as a small group of fathers of infants. These are broken down by the fathers' employers, with reference to what paternity leave provisions fathers were offered and their views of these. We now turn to outlining the flexible working arrangements available at the four employers and the types of leaves that they offered for care purposes.

Flexible Working Arrangements and Leave-Taking in the Four Employing Organisations

So that fathers' accounts are situated in their workplace contexts, this section outlines the types of flexible working arrangements that were offered in the four employers that the fathers were sampled from. The types of leaves for care purposes are also outlined here. Both formal policies that the employers have developed with regards to flexible working and informal, individually-negotiated flexible working practices are outlined.

In the table below, the flexible working practices for the four organisations are introduced. The Health Trust and the Communications Company both had nine different types of flexible working arrangements available to staff, and these were backed up by formal policies. The City Council has five flexible working arrangements, and the Car Parts Plant has the least with three. Unlike the other three employers, the Car Parts Plant flexible arrangements were negotiated individually by fathers with the Plant manager. There was an absence of formal flexible working policies in this workplace, which is surprising given that there is a legal right to request flexible working. The lack of formal policy may create problems with addressing this legal requirement. It can also be seen that each of the workplaces has their own mix of flexible working arrangements. The Communications Company was the only employer in the sample to have formal policies on homeworking – whether full-time homeworking or periodic homework. Part-time working was available across all four employers, making it the most available flexible working arrangement (although none of the fathers in this study were working part-time hours). Similarly, flexitime was available in three of the organisations, and it should be noted that the Car Parts Plant had a variant of flexitime that was not underpinned by any formal policy, it was individually negotiated by fathers on an occasional basis.

Table 5. 1: Flexible Working Arrangements Offered by the Four Case Study Employers

Flexible Working Arrangements	City Council	Health Trust	Communications Co.	Car Parts Plant
Term-time Working	X	X	X	
Career Break	X	X		
Self-rostering		X		
Full Home Working			X	
Periodic Home Working			X	
Flexitime	X	X	X	
Informally-negotiated Occasional Flexitime				X
Changing Shift Times				X
Part-time Working Hours	X	X	X	X
Compressed Hours		X	X	
Annualised Hours		X	X	
Job Share	X	X	X	
Voluntary Reduced Hours		X		
Phased retirement – gradually reducing hours			X	

In Table 2, below, the leaves for care purposes that the four employers offered their staff are outlined. The City Council offers the widest selection of leave types. In addition to both paid and unpaid special leave, they also offered time off for dependents and parental leave provisions above the statutory minimum (these are both unpaid leaves, as is the legislation that outlines the right to time off to care for dependents in an emergency and parental leave). The Health Trust and Communications Company both had a wider range of flexible working arrangements available than the City Council, but in terms of leaves they have fewer provisions, with both offering paid and unpaid special leave (however, these meet the legal requirement for time off to care for dependents in an emergency, since they can be accessed under these circumstances). The Car Parts Plant has the least leave provisions, as paternity leave is the only provision offered. In the absence of special leave provisions, fathers informally negotiated with the Plant manager to

work back any time off they had taken for care purposes. This does not fulfil the legal right for time off to care for dependants in an emergency, furthermore, if fathers are working the time back, this constrains the time that they can feasibly take off under these circumstances. It is also notable that prior to the introduction of statutory paternity leave provisions, the Car Parts Plant offered their employees the shortest length of paid leave – three days – than the three other employees who had policies in place which entitled fathers to a week's paid paternity leave.

Table 5. 2: Leaves for Care Purposes Offered by the Four Case Study Employers

Leaves for Care Purposes	**City Council**	**Health Trust**	**Communications Co.**	**Car Parts Plant**
Special Leave (Paid)	Up to 2 days per occasion needed	Up to 3 days – more negotiable	Up to 2 days	
Special Leave (Unpaid)	Up to 5 days per occasion needed	Up to 5 days – more negotiable	Once paid special leave used, further 2 days	
Time off for Dependents	Unpaid up to 2 days			
Parental Leave (included where provision is more generous than statutory provisions)	Unpaid up to 4 weeks in a 12 month period, to a maximum of 13 weeks for each child under 16 years			
Paternity Leave (prior to statutory provisions of 2 weeks' leave)	1 week (Paid)	1 week (paid)	1 week (paid)	3 days (paid)

Having outlined the flexible working arrangements and leaves for care purposes in the four organisations from which the fathers were sampled, we turn to outlining the flexible working experiences of the Health Trust fathers.

Health Trust Fathers

Health Trust Fathers' Access to and Take-up of Formal Flexible Working Policies

The Health Trust had flexible working policies which were advertised widely on payslips. Within the subsample of five fathers employed in the Health Trust, two fathers worked flexitime and another worked compressed hours. These fathers used their flexibility to enable them to take their children to school, or to be able to spend one day each week at home:

> This morning I took [my children] to school. So there's that bit of flexibility for me whereby I can take the kids to school, erm sort of to save sort of having to take them somewhere else first thing in the morning. And then you know, I come in and then if I start later, I finish later. So there is that flexibility.
>
> Phillip, Healthtrust, advisor (7 and 5)

> Compressed hours is that er, I'll simply work longer days more or less on a flexi-basis and have every other Monday off. And that gives me the chance to be home. My wife works the end of the week, so we're there together. The kids are safely in school, so! (Laughs) I don't mean that!
>
> Alan, Healthtrust, advisor (16 and 14)

Another father did not use a formal flexitime arrangement, but it was notable that he was the only father in the study to make use of the statutory entitlement to unpaid parental leave:

> Last summer and this summer I'm taking unpaid leave every Thursday, during the summer holidays. Erm, you know, you're entitled up to, I think it's two to three months off until they're five. And I'm making certain I'm taking it. Erm, I don't know what I'm going to do when the other one's five, I don't know, I haven't thought about it yet.
>
> Jonathan, Healthtrust, consultant (6 and 2)

There was another father who felt that his role as a senior staff nurse was not conducive to flexible working, but he had secured special leave in the past for caring needs:

> I had to take er, leave when I was over on the general intensive care because my wife was very ill er, with the second pregnancy so I had to take leave so I could look after our eldest child. Erm, I was lucky and I managed to get that as special leave, it was only for a couple of days. Erm, but I know they're not very keen on giving you special leave, they would rather you take it as annual leave. I think it's a bit naughty personally.
>
> Adam, Healthtrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

Even though the Trust had work/life balance policies, there was still a feeling amongst the fathers that there were operational difficulties associated with their practice. A few fathers had contradictory feelings concerning the operation of work/life balances practices in their organisation. Whilst they recognised that there is a perceived need amongst carers for flexibility, it was felt that the constant nature of service provision did not always facilitate this approach:

> There is a family-friendly policy but it, it doesn't really work... From a nursing perspective the shift has to be covered, one way or another. And if they start giving me nine 'til five hours then they've got to give them for everyone and then the shift won't be covered and, and heart operations will be cancelled. So I think that's pretty much across the board as well, as far as nursing goes. Family-friendly hours just don't really exist.
>
> Adam, Healthtrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

> I think from, you know, I see it I suppose because of the nature of the role I do, I see it from both sides. You know, whereas I see that there are people who need work/life balance as such, and they need to be able to work around children and what have you, and I can see the need for that. And I can see the need for it. I also see it from the employer's point of view where you think; well it's very difficult. And you've got to provide a service, and bearing in mind the health service is a twenty-four seven profession very, very difficult. Erm, and I think it's, you know, whereas I'd love to be able to stand up and be an advocate of, you know, you know, and I think, you know, all people should be allowed to work while their kids are in school, nine-thirty 'til three. I can't do it because I can see, obviously the service can't, can't provide that. Erm, I think that erm, I think that the legislation is there, the framework is there, with good intentions, but I don't think it's quite there. And I think it's a lot more to do with, I don't think it's sort of necessarily the legal framework etcetera that we've got to work and the policies. I think it's, I think it's the actual culture as a whole and I think it's a long way changing.
>
> Phillip, Healthtrust, advisor (7 and 5)

It is notable here that this father constructs nursing as not having family-friendly working practices, which would seem to point to constraints on taking up the Trust's formal flexible working policies. Other fathers who were not in roles that were directly involved in patient care were nevertheless impacted upon at times where they may have to work atypical hours in order to carry out their role:

> ... this morning is probably a quite good example. I, I don't have to be here twenty-four seven, but I'm just still doing an investigation on an incident that happened on a nightshift. So, this morning, I went to interview a nurse who was on nightshift. And in order to be able to see her, I was in there quarter to seven this morning, and she came in at the end of her shift. And I've done it before when I've just gone in perhaps eleven o'clock at night to see someone in on nightshift. So, it's only rare that I need to do that, but all amongst HR now and again, you have to do that because you have to fit in with frontline staff's working hours. We, we don't have those restrictions but I mean, I think everybody accepts it and it goes with the job. And sometimes it makes life difficult.
>
> Alan, Healthtrust, advisor (16 and 14)

For a subgroup of two fathers in the health trust, being in a position of seniority benefited their work/life balance. One father worked as a consultant and the other as a Senior Human Resources Advisor[24]. Although they both worked slightly long hours, with the Senior Human Resources Advisor working 45 hours a week and the Consultant generally working 48 hours but up to 55 hours during particularly busy times, they both explicitly recognise that their seniority helps them to have a degree of flexibility in their working hours:

> ... I think I have a significant degree of flexibility in my life, and that has come with seniority. And it is easier for me.
>
> Jonathan, Healthtrust, consultant (6 and 2)

[24] This father had spent most of his career at the same local authority where I had recruited some fathers for this study, so some of his experiences of how seniority helped him to manage his work/life balance draw upon his time in the local authority.

This father contrasts himself with junior clinicians who he feels do not have flexibility in scheduling their work. Similarly, the senior human resources advisor felt that fathers who were less senior than him would struggle to have his degree of flexibility, although he has less flexibility than the consultant. These fathers felt that seniority helped them to have a greater degree of autonomy in their roles. Furthermore, they feel able and more secure to make demands for time off work for their family needs:

> ... the people in our department you know, know that if your child is sick, or if one of my colleague's wives back's gone, yeah, you've got to do something about it. You know, there's no discussion.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

It may not be so much autonomy in both cases, but more the confidence that both fathers feel that they have gained to be able to assert themselves in informal discussions with colleagues if time off was required. This highlights the importance of the informal context of the workplace. For instance, where people work in teams and where there is no formal entitlement to flexible working policies and access is down to individual negotiation with line managers, this can often result in spreading the burden of absences on to colleagues. The fear of burdening colleagues or negative come back from colleagues may act as a constraint against taking time off.

Health Trust Fathers' Paternity Leave

The fathers employed by the health trust tended not to raise any issues that they had with regards to taking paternity leave. However, we have seen how one father felt that he had some difficulties in accessing special leave to support his family whilst his wife was unwell during pregnancy. One father, a consultant raised issues with the low income replacement rate of his paid paternity leave:

> Paid paternity leave it's a bit of a non-event, as far as I'm concerned because there's not, you know there's unpaid parental. I suppose because if you, unless you earn a very small amount of money, it doesn't actually make much difference, you know at the time. If you lose your salary, it is your salary, and you won't be back-paid it.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

Communications Company Fathers

Communications Company Fathers' Access and Take-up of Formal Flexible Working Policies

The communications company had work/life balance policies of which all five fathers were aware. However, there were some issues with how the specified policies worked out in terms of publishing them and whether all roles in the organisation were seen as conducive to flexible working:

> They have huge policies on work/life balance, and what you tend to find is that because the company's so big, it can be a bit hit and miss as to whether you get it properly. Erm, whether your mangers are aware of the facilities available or sympathetic towards you and er, you've got to do a lot of the research yourself. It's there on the intranet, but erm, there isn't anybody to guide you to it more. Erm, obviously some jobs lend themselves more, so you can take a leave of absence than others do. So, I think it does depend on the environment you're in, whether you get the whole benefits out of them.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

> Some parents here have flexible hours and homework. That's if it suits them and their role here. As I'm a manager and I'm also customer-facing, it wouldn't work for me, so I couldn't really be home-based. So they are quite an enlightened employer in that they'll provide support - not for all though as it does depend upon your role here.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

Not all of the fathers employed in the communications company felt that flexible working was something that they would be able to use. In the example above, customer-facing limited the manager's abilities to homework. One father did not have a role that involved customer service provision and he feels that he was 'fortunate' to be able to secure homeworking. Another father

is able to homework so that he can supervise his children during the summer holidays. Another father who similarly secured flexitime pointed to his relative 'privilege' at having these arrangements:

> I think in, in some ways I was probably quite privileged to, in having such flexible arrangements. I don't get the impression that's the same for everybody, but er, even if there are er, you know, statutory things that they're able to take advantage of.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

This father points to his privilege, even when he recognises that there are public policies that his colleagues could access which could help them to work flexibly. All of the Communications fathers had taken some time off for childcare such as when children were unwell and to cover the school holidays, although there is a contrast with the consultant in the health trust in that the use of annual leave for these purposes was widespread:

> I've taken annual leave for childcare purposes. Er, you know, my wife and I have been trying to juggle school holidays whenever. But I've never taken anything other than annual leave.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> If the children are ill and off school, through holidays I often take time off to look after them.
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> I tend to try and book some leave sort of half terms, erm over Christmas and normally two weeks in the summer as well. Erm, and there is the odd occasion perhaps we work it out between myself and my wife, if we need to be off we would be able to take leave. So the answer's yes, I would take leave to be, to spend time with them.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

Only one father had used a form of 'casual leave':

> If you have any difficulty you can always have what we would call casual leave. So if there was an emergency, I can't come in today, then you can make the hours up at another time. So yes.

Would you use that yourself?[25]
I have done in the past yes.

Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

These fathers tended to work overtime as they felt it was a requirement of their posts. However, rather than feeling pressurised and in effect, pushed into working long hours, they assert that they have chosen to do this. The role of individual choice was recurrent in these fathers' accounts of their approach to their work:

> I think in terms of time off that's my personal choice, you know. I've chosen a career, I mean, I'm doing it
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> Depending what projects we were working with and if we were running business events, we might have to be away from home overnight for an early start if we had a seven o'clock meeting the following day. Because I had staff in Newcastle and Reading, so that also meant that sometimes I had to be on the train by six in the morning to, to actually get myself to an office at a reasonable time. Erm, but I very much was in control of that myself. You know, if I allowed things to go in my diary that meant I had to do that, I knew I was committed to them. It wasn't somebody was forcing me to do them. So on that score it was flexible because I controlled the er, the appointments that I had.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

These fathers all see their working hours as being their own choice, as something that is just a part of their career – a career path that they have also chosen.

Communications Fathers' Paternity Leave

These fathers' responses to paternity leave were very telling. These fathers tended not to be so keen on policy intervention as they felt that it was largely up to the individual father to manage their work/life balance. On the whole, they were happy with the length of paternity leave that they took:

[25] Where text is italicised in interview excerpts, this is to indicate my probing of respondents.

> I think [employer] are very generous with their annual leave terms and their paternity leave.
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

Others could see that the current provisions were sufficient and did not need to be extended further:

> I think if you look at it from a point of view when I had the leave, fourteen years ago and what it is now, it has already been improved. Because I know one of my colleagues is off with paternity leave at the moment... I think he's got three weeks paternity leave and two weeks annual leave. So he's off for over a month. So I think the improvements have already been made. I think at the time, sort of fifteen, twenty years ago erm, it, paternity leave wasn't something that people took, erm, you just took time off to suit yourself. Which is what I did basically with my annual leave.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

The effects of paternity leave provisions on different cohorts of fathers can also be seen here. In terms of policies around leave taking, these fathers tended to stress the choices that individual fathers make and that policies would only make a difference if fathers themselves wanted to make use of them:

> ... a lot of the things that you do with your own, your own life and your family is down to how you feel about things yourself. But there's always things that can help. But I think that if people haven't got the motivation to do it, all the help in the world isn't going to be of any assistance of all. You know, you've actually got to be prepared to do these things yourself.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

> In the previous role I had to what I'm doing now, I did a lot more sort of evening and weekend work, so I tended to miss out on that. Erm, but again, that's, that's your choice for example if you want to come in on overtime, erm obviously because of financial constraints and things. But I can't think of anything specific that the employer could do, I think it's down to you to make time. So it's down to the individual rather than the employer. You make a conscious effort of being there when you should be.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

Local Authority Fathers

Local Authority Fathers' Access to and Take-up of Formal Flexible Working Policies

The fathers working for the local authority contrasted with the communications company fathers in that their responses did not point to their working long hours. Their weekly working hours tended to be around 37 hours, with additional hours worked taken off as flexi leave. These fathers had both access to and made use of flexible working. A few fathers were able to use flexitime on a day-to-day basis so that they were able to take their children to school:

> I take my daughter, Chloe to school three or four times a week. School doesn't start until nine, so I will clock in when I get to work at quarter past nine, you know, I'm not outside the core hours then. So that I can build up a balance then if I work over my thirty-seven hours a week, and if I don't you know, I can build up a negative balance as well. As long as I don't go over the ten-hour negative balance, then there's not an issue with it.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

> Our flexi-system here allows me, within reasonable parameters, to change my arrangements halfway through the day. So I can finish earlier if I need to, and so on. So I think some people here have got a flexible system. I tend to be very flexible because I have to react to what my wife's arrangements are herself.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

In both instances the fathers' partners are in full-time employment and they have one young, primary school attending child. Fathers' use of flexitime helps their partners to remain in full-time paid work in that they are able to have a role in ferrying children through having the flexibility to control the start and finishing times of their working hours.

The local authority fathers took leave for care purposes. They had provisions to take special leave, which one father had used only a few hours before our interview:

> I took special leave this morning to take my eldest to hospital. He injured his back whilst he was on a year out in Australia, so I had to take him to hospital this morning

to check that out, and again, I had special leave to take him to the hospital appointment with that.

George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

Two other fathers had not used special leave to cover care, they either chose to use annual leave or flexi leave:

I might also take odd days off, and these would be as annual leave or flexi-time. Recently, my son had to have an inoculation so I've taken it for that, and other times, to cover for my wife.

Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

My mother used to look after my eldest. But she's not in the best of health so I have taken leave to cover for childcare.
How often have you taken this leave?
They're just days dotted around, it's not long-term. I take flexi and annual leave to cover it.

Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

These fathers took leave for childcare needs on an occasional basis.

There was some anecdotal evidence that flexitime was not available for all employed in the organisation. It may well be that access to flexible working was role-dependent, which shares similarities with the communications company, with more manual roles requiring workers to be present for fixed hours:

There are still offices that aren't within the flexi-time scheme. Erm, usually perhaps, sort of the manual graded posts where they're, you know where they're out on the streets collecting rubbish, they've got set hours of work. Erm, and there's perhaps the social care staff, who work in the communities, they have set hours as well normally, rather than sort of flexible hours. Although they're flexible in the sense that if there's still work that they need to do, they obviously do it, but they're paid overtime then, until they've finished that piece of work.

George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

Some fathers were aware that those employed in more senior roles had a limited scope to use flexitime. One father felt that there were expectations that those employed in senior roles are expected to "be at the council's beck and call, as it were, for as many hours as they want you". Another father drew upon the experiences of a colleague who had recently become a father, but work demands limited his availability to his children:

> I can speak about a new father who's higher up the organisation than myself... when it comes to seeing what their like in the workplace, their fatherhood as we see it in the workplace it's very different from mine. His is very different from mine. He defers an awful lot to his wife, as he did previously though, I don't know whether this is a fatherhood thing or whether it's just his husband role. He tends to pass on a lot of responsibility to his wife. Erm, he takes time to be with the children, but it's fairly clear that the work demands on him mean that his time is impacted upon by work. He doesn't get to spend the sort of time with the children that he'd like to, although he tries to make more. But he's certainly brought away from the children, because of work as well. I certainly wouldn't like to be in that position.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

Therefore, this sample of fathers may constitute a relatively privileged subset of local government employees who, through their office-based roles have been able to secure access to flexitime.

All local authority fathers felt that access to flexible working arrangements was a major benefit of working in the public sector. Fathers perceived their working culture to be conducive to family needs and that they were working for a supportive employer:

> This organisation's very good. I don't know what it would be like in another. For fathers in this organisation, I think it's becoming easier. From what I can see, anyway. The use of paternity leave is quite popular. A lot of people have babies in this organisation. You best run! There's something about the air in this place! A lot of people are on, take paternity leave. Some people take an extra bit, unpaid as well.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

> They bend over backwards to help people with children. But this is much to those who haven't got families' annoyance. There is an allowance to change our hours, so they're very accommodating.
>
> Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

The quote from Daniel above was the only instance in the data collected across all four workplaces where the negative attitudes of colleagues without children were mentioned. This may be indicative of the limits of the Council's flexible working arrangements, in terms of the attitudes of some colleagues undermining others' scope to work flexibly, where people work in teams. Fathers evoked a contrast between the flexible nature of their employment with their perceptions of working in the private sector. The private sector was associated with a long hours working culture which reduces fathers' availability to families:

> ... they are family-friendly. The minimal expected hours are a lot lower than in the private sector. Having that balance seems to be impossible in the private sector. It's expected that you will have to spend a lot of time out of the house and at work.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

> I think I've benefited quite well within, working within local government structure, rather than in the private sector. And that the flexible working hours as well you know is, it is something that erm, local government has, you know, has had in place for a long time, whereas the private sector maybe is still sort of set hours, structured hours and also has the, the er, the long working hours culture as well, more strongly than local government.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

These fathers feel that their experiences of flexible working in the public sector contrasts with the perceived presenteeism of private sector employment. It was notable that the fathers see the flexible working arrangements they have accessed as atypical.

Local Authority Fathers' Paternity Leave

A few fathers had recently taken paternity leave, two of which had no issues with the paid leave that they received:

> When Chloe was born I had an entitlement to one week's paternity leave, which was at full pay. But obviously, since the new regulations have come in, we've got a new policy as well, where fathers or nominated carers can take two week's leave.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

> I've taken paternity leave with our baby boy. I took the first week as paternity leave and the second week was taken as annual leave.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

One father took a combination of paternity leave and special leave around the time of his daughter's birth, but he would have preferred the special leave to have been paid:

> With the special leave, it would have been handy to have had a paid special leave. I would also like a paid parental leave scheme. So a few weeks paid parental leave would help.
>
> Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

One father of two daughters aged eleven and nine did not have such generous leave entitlements, as prior to his employer introducing a local entitlement to one weeks' paternity leave, and the later introduction of statutory paternity leave, he only had one day's leave:

> Well it was alright at the time, 'cos that's what everybody else had. But since, I've discovered that er, males are sort of entitled to a week. It, it, now feels a little bit unfair. So I feel pretty aggrieved about that now, but of course that's the way it is, I can't do much about it. And I don't think they're going to backtrack for me... afterwards, it would have been nicer if it was much more flexible and I could have been on flexitime at the time. We did not have flexitime then. And that would have been nice, but again, that's the way it was. You have to accept it.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

This father feels that paternity leave entitlements and flexibility over working hours are now more engrained in the local authority's working culture for new fathers, but he also shows similarities with the father from the Communications Company in discussing the impacts that policy provisions have on different cohorts of fathers. Other support for the view that fathers'

taking paternity leave in the local authority was now widespread emerged during an interview with a stepfather who did not take paternity leave but nevertheless identifies it as part of biological fathers' 'acclimatisation' to fatherhood:

> I don't know whether this language sounds a bit dry, but I acquired a seven-year old daughter. I didn't go into this gently with a nine-month preparation and then seven years of acclimation. So my experience has been very kind of sudden. Erm, so I don't think it's typical in that respect. There are people in the office who have had new babies and I've seen that they become fathers or mothers, within the time period that I've been here and it's been a very different experience there.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

Car Parts Plant Fathers

Car Parts Plant Fathers' Access to and Use of Informal Flexibility

The manual workers' accounts contrast with the managerial fathers who couched their work-family practices in individual terms in which they chose to either prioritise their career or their family. Line managers figured a very prominent role in the manual workers' interviews, for it was they who in effect, mediated fathers' access to 'flexibility' – these were mainly requests to take time off work if it was needed in case of children's illness if their partner was not able to cover it, or to provide cover at home for their partner when they might be struggling to find childcare in one case. In these situations, fathers approached their manager to request leave:

> Myself recently, erm I've got an agreement with my manager that if I need to leave the office, you know, I can do so. And you know, as long as I work the hours back, and it doesn't interfere with my workload as well.
> *Is that like flexitime then?*
> Erm, no, 'cos it's not, it's not on a permanent basis... It's if I need to.
>
> Steve, Plant, manual (20, 17 and 3)

For these fathers, their work-family practices would appear to be much more contingent on their manager agreeing to their requests for time off, or to work time back.

The majority felt that their manager was supportive of their needs, and that they did feel able to approach him:

> I think our manager here's got some children himself so he's, we think he's, you know, well aware of it. And he would be sympathetic towards any, you know, issues or problems you have, and that, you know...
>
> Colin, Plant, manual (9)

> The thing with the company, if I had a phone call now from the school, I could go and see any of the bosses, and say, "listen, I've got to go". And they'll say, "yeah, no problem". The school is only two fields that way, the secondary school.
>
> Harry, Plant, manual, lone father (14 and 11)

These accounts would seem to indicate that the fathers in the car parts plant had, on the whole, a good relationship with their manager. This was reflected in the way in which they repeatedly described him as being 'supportive' and 'understanding'. Intriguingly, this workplace had the least official flexible working policies, with the arrangements made on a more unofficial basis. A few fathers explained how they were able to work differing shift patterns on certain occasions – whilst this was allowed formally, it was to be for a minimum period of a week, but the manager had granted it on the specific day it was needed:

> There's two, two start times. You can either work six 'til two thirty, or you can work seven thirty 'til four. One of the two, you either work one shift or the other shift. And you're supposed to work either one or the other and give notice. And it's got to be agreed with the manager. But as I say, I know my manager, he's like, if you wanted to do one of the six 'til half past two for one day because you needed to pick the kids up, you won't have a problem with it. You won't. The company, the ruling is you're supposed to do it for a week, but it's very flexible... it's not supposed to be that way, just it is. Like if you did take an hour or two off today, there's no problems. Just work it back another day, just make arrangements and work it back. But that's up to, there's no company ruling on that, it's at the manager's discretion. And they are quite flexible with that.
>
> Paul, Plant, manual (9 and 8)

The fathers that worked in the plant expressed their gratitude that their manager would be flexible. One father, a lone father upon the death of his partner, remarked that the supportiveness of management enabled him to continue working:

> The company's very flexible. And I believe that's what's enabled me to carry on working, with the support from my family.
>
> Harry, Plant, manual, lone father (14 and 11)

Leave for care purposes was taken by the Plant fathers on an occasional basis. The leave would typically be a day's length and would either be taken as annual leave or through an informal arrangement with their manager to work the time taken back:

> Holidays, erm and for unexpected illnesses, you know, sort of emergencies that have occurred. And school and that, you know. And obviously the school that my son goes to is just up the road, so you know.
>
> Colin, Plant, manual (9)

> Depending on childcare needs, whatever I have to take the odd day, holiday to watch the children if my wife's working. You know, generally during the school holidays
>
> Paul, Plant, manual (9 and 8)

> Er, the odd day where I have been doing, generally...Very rare, very rare. Maybe two, three times a year.
>
> Harry, Plant, manual, lone father (14 and 11)

> Erm, no. Not for any extended amount of time. Erm, I've been allowed to leave work early, erm, if you know, I need to go and get my youngest son, but then work the time back anyway.
>
> Steve, Plant, manual (20, 17 and 3)

However, there were limits as to how far the fathers felt able to request flexibility. One father described the great difficulties that his partner faces in covering care for their eight and nine year old children during the mornings when she works shifts as a community carer, but how he feels that he cannot ask to start work later to help his partner. Two other fathers felt that their shift

starting times were too early and would like the scope to start work later. It would seem that the fathers feel confident to approach their manager on a one-off basis, but they feel unable to ask for more routine arrangements that would benefit them in the long-term. The fathers' capacities to work flexibly were constrained by an informal understanding that they mostly work their set shift times, and that flexibility was to be negotiated on an occasional basis. A few other fathers felt that the early morning starts involved in their work lead to some difficulties with regards to care:

> We have got a routine, you know every, every morning, you know the kids have got to be up by a certain time. And that's the, that's the only difficult thing, it could be a drawback possibly, with starting work at seven-thirty is, that we have to wake the baby. So she's, you know, some days she is up, she'll just wake and she's up like a button. But other days she's asleep, and we've physically got to lift her out of bed and take her with us. So, that's, that's a bit of a, of a nightmare really.
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

> Possibly my employer could be a bit more flexible with working times, you know, yes. I think we have only got those two set start and finish times, so, you know, so I mean, the one's quite early and – well, they're both quite early actually, aren't they?! (laughs)
> *Yes, they are!*
> One's early, one's very early, one's just a bit early. So, yeah. Possibly some flexibility there might be ok, you know.
>
> Colin, Plant, manual (9)

Car Parts Plant Fathers' Paternity Leave

These fathers, more than the other sample subgroups, tended to have issues with their paternity leave, particularly those who were fathers of younger children. One father would have preferred to have taken paid leave beyond his three days' entitlement, it seems in the case of his youngest child that he was legally entitled to ask for two weeks' paid paternity leave:

> It could have been paid. I thought that that was a bit unfair, because you're put in a position that you can't really avoid.
>
> Greg, Plant, manual (17 months, 12 and 5)

For another father the issue of payment overlapped with the length of leave, as he would have liked to have taken a longer length of paid paternity leave:

> I'd have liked to have taken a bit, a bit longer off, to be perfectly honest. But, it's really just down to constraints, financially really. Because, obviously my wife is already on maternity leave so, you know, the financial er, benefit was well, you know, you get a hundred pound, I think it is a week from the government. And for work that's all you get, so if I was to take extra time off, it's just not financially viable to do. You know, that's why I took some extra days of my annual leave just to give us a little bit of time, and then you know, I may have taken some more time off. A day here, a day there, when we need to really. But if it was all, I would prefer to see a longer period of pay, from the government. You know, I can't see how a husband and a wife can be expected to both be off work at the same time. It's just physically not possible. It just couldn't work financially.
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

Four fathers would have preferred a longer period of leave, as they felt that their presence was needed in the home. Fathers drew comparisons with maternity leave provisions to highlight the inequalities in the leave systems when they accessed them:

> [It] could have been longer, I suppose. Erm, but then you get into the realms of maternity leave then. You know, if you start to take an extended period of time, and obviously, only one person in the family's allowed to have maternity leave. I think, I don't know, and especially within employment, they're generally younger, the male having maternity leave. So it could be better, if, you know, it was more flexible for, you know, both parents.
>
> Steve, Plant, manual (20, 17 and 3)

> It probably could have been more generous, I think. Yes, it could have been more. But, er, I suppose I would say that really, wouldn't I? (laughs). But yes, I think it's, I mean, I know women get a lot of time off don't they? So it could have been more generous for the fathers.
>
> Colin, Plant, manual (9)

> I would have liked to have had the option to take unpaid leave.
>
> Joe, Plant, manual (6)

Three of the plant fathers who had older children felt that their length of paternity leave was adequate. The first father had taken his three days' entitlement and twelve days of annual leave, whilst the other two fathers took three days:

> I was lucky because I'd been here quite a long time. So I had the full holiday entitlement. So, and between the twelve days of choice at the time, and also the working holidays en lieu. Not only was it the summer shutdown, it was any holiday previous and soon as I found out that we were expected to do it, and I sort of said, "listen, I need as much time then to work as so I can have off when the child is born".
>
> Harry, Plant, manual, lone father (14 and 11)

> *Are there any improvements that could have been made to the leave that you took?*
> No. I'd say erm, no not really from my, you know, my personal opinion.
>
> David, Plant, manual, divorced lone father (18 and 14)

Summary

In this chapter it emerged that the fathers in this study drawn from four different employers, and from a variety of occupations had differing access to flexible working arrangements. Fathers employed by the Health Trust could access flexible working which was underpinned by formal policies. Three out of these five fathers used flexible working, whilst another had the seniority to schedule aspects of his role. One father did not use flexible working, as he felt that it was not possible in his role. This points to some operational difficulties in the formal policies, such as the need to cover shifts where colleagues work in teams. Fathers that were in support roles could be drawn into working atypical hours on occasions. There were contradictory feelings amongst the fathers about flexible working, as they recognised that there was a need for these arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities, but their impact was constrained by the 24/7 nature of the Health Trust's service. A subsample of two Health Trust fathers felt that being in senior positions benefited their work/life balance. Although they worked longer hours than the other fathers in this Health Trust, they had some scope to autonomously schedule their work and the confidence to raise the issue with their colleagues of taking time off for family needs in informal

negotiations. The Health Trust fathers did not raise any issues regarding paternity leave, but one father did have problems accessing special leave, and another father was critical of the payment levels of paternity leave.

The Communications Company fathers were all aware of formal flexible working policies offered by their employer, although one felt that they were not sufficiently publicised, and others felt that their roles were not suited to flexible working. The two fathers that did use flexible working pointed to their 'fortune' and 'privilege'. All five fathers have taken time off for childcare needs, such as when children were unwell or to cover care during the school holidays, all used their annual leave to cover these eventualities, but one father had also used special leave. There was some overtime working, which they felt was through their own 'choice'. This group of fathers were marked by their tendency to not be supportive of further policy interventions in paternity leave, as they felt that it was a matter of personal choice. These fathers were pleased with the length of their paternity leave. It was also felt that policies would only work if fathers were actively choosing to make use of them.

The five fathers employed by the Local Authority worked shorter hours of thirty-seven hours per week, any time over this was taken off as flexi-leave. Fathers had access to flexible working arrangements, which four fathers used. Three fathers used flexitime to enable them to share in the routine of taking their children to school. In terms of leave-taking for childcare, three fathers had used special leave, and two fathers used a combination of annual leave and flexi-leave. Flexitime was not available to all fathers in this organisation, such as those in manual and senior roles. These fathers may constitute a relatively privileged subset of local government employees. Fathers felt that being able to work flexibly was a benefit of working in local government and that their employer was supportive of family needs. A contrast was constructed with the private

sector in their accounts, which they perceived to have a long hours working culture. It was notable that the Local Government fathers saw their flexible working arrangements as 'atypical'. There were mixed feelings about paternity leave provisions, two fathers raised no issues with their leave, one father wanted his special leave to be paid, one father only had one days' leave but pointed to how this is no longer typical in this organisation.

The nine fathers that worked in the Car Parts Plant contrasted with the Communications Company fathers' emphasis on personal choice, as they stressed the importance of their line manager in mediating their access to flexibility. In the absence of formal policies on flexible working, which demonstrates how fathers' legal entitlements do not necessarily filter down to local provisions, flexibility was constructed as occasionally taking time off if children were unwell or covering childcare. Most fathers felt that their manager was accommodating of their requests and they were grateful for the unofficial arrangements that they had made with him. Fathers were able to take annual leave or to work time back to cover family needs. There were limits to fathers' requests for flexibility, as they did not feel able to ask for it on a daily basis which three fathers would ideally, like. The Car Parts Plant fathers took the least amount of paternity leave and raised more issues with it. Those who had younger children would prefer to take a longer period of paid leave, and some may not have accessed their entitlement to two weeks' paid paternity leave. A few felt that paternity leave provisions were inadequate when compared to maternity leave. Two themes have emerged from this chapter: the constraints of team working in accessing formal flexible working policies and that a distinction must to be drawn between local entitlements that are implemented by employers and statutory provisions – in some instances in this study, the two did not always correspond.

6.
How Fathers' 'Account' for their Flexible Working Practices

Introduction

The findings from the data analysis concerning the fathers' organisational contexts and flexible working practices have been outlined, so we now turn to the tasks of 'making sense' of how fathers' account for them. To recap, the first research question explores the working practices that fathers' take up (or do not) that take account of their fathering. The previous chapter indicated how the fathers' employers' offered different arrangements, some formal and others on an informal basis, although there was some variation within each group. In this chapter, some similarities across employers are drawn out. This is particularly with regard to managers' experiences and with the fathers in desk-bound roles in the health trust and local authority with formal flexitime entitlements, although there are differences in how these formal policies operated and experienced on an everyday level. A small group of fathers in senior roles in the sample have distinct experiences which contrast with the nature of the socially-bounded 'choices' that managers made concerning fatherhood and their career trajectory. The fathers employed in the car parts plant provide a contrast to the other three groups of fathers in that they do not have formalised everyday entitlements for flexibility. We now turn to first group of fathers' experiences, the managers.

Managerial Fathers: 'I've chosen a career, I mean, I'm doing it.'

This group is comprised of all of the five fathers from the Communications Company (Chris, Matthew, Tom, Richard, and Duncan) who were in various managerial roles and one father, Bill, from the Car Parts Plant who worked as a Harness Manufacturing Services Manager. All six fathers had line management responsibilities as part of their roles. In terms of their family

situations, all fathers were partnered, although Tom is a step-father. These fathers mostly had older children, aged over ten, with some in their teens, although Richard had a two year old daughter.

What was a common and uniting theme running through the interview accounts given by this group was that these fathers' viewed their working hours as being their own choice, as part of their careers. They stress their agency in their working hours and career. The way in which choice is emphasised in their accounts would *appear* to tie in with preference theory (Hakim, 2000a). It could be argued that the managerial fathers are a work-centred group of men, and that it is their personal dispositions to have a career that determines their behaviour. However, this group of fathers' made their choices with reference to what they perceived to be acceptable within the demands of their organisational roles:

> *Do they have family-friendly policies here, or flexible working that you can use?*
> Er for me personally it's difficult because obviously the position I'm in er, as a Centre Manager requires me to be in quite a lot. Although my contracted hours are thirty-six, as I say I do approximately fifty hours a week, which is obviously my choice but that's what I need to be here. So the flexible working doesn't really come into it (laughs).
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

This father foregrounds his choice in his working hours only to continue to imply that he needs to work those hours to carry out his job effectively. So that it is perhaps not his own personal 'choice', but rather that he has internalised the demands of his work. We can understand what these fathers' perceive as the demands of their employers provides a context in which their choices are constrained. In other research into work/life balance, workplace culture similarly enters into employees' decisions regarding their working time. For instance, managers can

reason that it is necessary for them to work overtime in order to support colleagues or the needs of clients (Hyman et. al. 2005).

Fathers in managerial roles viewed their paid employment in terms of it being a responsibility. They felt able to show their responsibility by spending additional hours at work. What the managerial group of fathers in this study felt that they 'needed to do to get the job done' was shaped by contextual factors, notably their workplace culture, which in turn has a tangible impact upon what is perceived as possible and what is not as they negotiate their working hours. Their working hours are grounded in a context and are 'worked through' (c.f. Finch and Mason, 1993; Williams, 2004) by the fathers within what they view as being possible within their particular situation. An understanding of how fathers' negotiate what constitutes reasonable working hours within their organisational contexts and what they perceive to be the demands of their roles offers more insight than the approach offered by preference theory where decisions are free-floating and where empirically, we act according to our own preferences.

The managerial fathers started their careers in more manual roles, taking on work-based training that was required for promotion opportunities. This ties in with the notion of the career as the managerial fathers have risen through organisational grades which has required a significant time commitment from them. In seeking promotion employees are subject to pressures to visibly 'perform' in their work which can lead to a compulsion to work longer hours (Crompton 2006:80). Devoting long hours to paid employment needs to be situated within an understanding of organisational discourses of time, particularly the notion of commitment to having a career. The notion of commitment is drawn upon by this father, who contrasts the 'demands' of his managerial role with his partner's rigid, NHS nursing, shift patterns:

> *How about your wife's employer, are they supportive if she needs any flexibility?*
> They're quite rigid because she works for the er, NHS obviously, and they have to fill erm, er. To be honest they're more, more rigid than mine are in one way. Erm, mine are just demands of me really, to do my job properly.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

Thus managerial fathers do refer to workplace demands, even though these fathers' asserted in their accounts that they do not experience them as a conflict in their family obligations. Although the fathers emphasise their agency, a closer examination of their accounts would point to a form of 'constrained autonomy' (Perrons et. al. 2005) which limits and restricts the choices that they feel able to make. The managerial fathers' accounts initially appear to provide an empirical illustration of Hakim's (2000a) preference theory, but it is not enough to uncritically accept the weight given to agency in their accounts and their relative downplaying of constraints.

Three of the managerial fathers in the Communications Company did not feel able to access flexible working arrangements – feeling that their supervisory roles did not lend themselves to flexibility. In addition, one managerial father worked in the Car Parts Plant where there were no formal policies on flexible working. This echoes wider research findings that managers have concerns about taking up flexible working arrangements as they worry that it may negatively impact upon their careers (Houston and Waumsley, 2003; Fagan, 2001a). These fathers did not so much talk about the potential damage that working flexibly may do to their careers, but they did feel that they would not be able to carry out their roles properly if they worked flexibly. Two managerial fathers from the Communications Company took up flexible working, as one homeworked whilst the other used flexitime. It is notable how they point to their use of these arrangements as 'fortunate':

What sorts of arrangements is it possible to have here? You said earlier that you can work from home.
The company actively promotes homeworking wherever it's practicable. Obviously it's not practicable in lots of circumstances, but I'm fortunate to be in a job where I can work from home... I would imagine it's quite difficult for them [other fathers] to have that work/life balance. So that they don't work for such a supportive company. I mean, I think most of my friends um, are either in the building trade or work for organisations that are manual workers that type of thing. So it would be very difficult for them to have the same sort of life as I've got.

Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

This would indicate that in the Communications Company, flexible working amongst managerial fathers was seen as a 'perk' (Lewis, 1997) and by no means the 'norm'. Both fathers contrast with the other managerial fathers in that they do not supervise large teams of staff. The need for both of these fathers to be physically present at their workplace is less of an issue, and their lesser supervisory role offers more scope for them to have some autonomy over their working day and task discretion (Fagan, 2001a).

Discourses of choice and of actively managing their work/life balance and career path were seen in both groups of fathers. This highlights the degree of agency that they present themselves as possessing in their accounts. These fathers frequently talked of 'managing' their work and family needs, as can be seen in this instance where being asked about how beneficial the three days' paternity leave, prompted this father to talk more broadly about his 'juggling game':

I think it's a juggling game, basically. How you manage your business life against your home life.

Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

Curiously, this father's use of the term, 'managing' to describe his negotiation of work and family life is reminiscent of the 'reversal of worlds' identified by Hochschild (1997). This particular father perhaps provides the most extreme example of emphasising his agency whilst

downplaying constraints. Whilst working overseas in Romania for a period of six weeks, he describes how he managed his time so that he was able to work overseas but also found the time to watch his teenage son play rugby on a weekend:

> *And the weekdays and the weekends, do they vary?*
> Erm, the weekdays and weekends we follow them both, as I mentioned, they both play rugby and we tend to follow them. So they'll go with their friends and, or we'll either take them to the game dependingly. And one way or another we'll all end up at the games, so, you know, between my wife and I we both watch them each day. So our weekends are pretty busy during that season, during the summer season... my son played in Belgium this year with rugby and we all went over to watch the game and I balanced my working life against that because I was in Romania for a six-week period, my son was playing. So I flew out of Romania to fly to Brussels to fly back, to fly back to Romania. So, you know, I tend to meet my needs of the family as well as my business side of life, and I make sure I do! (laughs)
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

This example is demonstrative of how this group of fathers' saw their negotiations over work and life as something that the individual father manages, and makes certain decisions over. However, this father still made his choices in the context of his family relationships as well as work. So although he was working overseas he was not prepared to do so at the expense of missing his son play in a rugby tournament in Brussels. Clearly this was a family event which he regarded as important, and he did not want the demands of his employment to interfere with his attendance. These fathers are not prepared to sacrifice family relationships for the needs of their jobs; they felt that they were trying to negotiate and meet their responsibilities for both. Here, there are parallels with a criticism that has been made by many researchers examining how people make decisions in relationships, namely that individuals do not make choices in a social vacuum. Choices are grounded in the contexts that make up the fabric people's everyday lives (cf. Finch, 1989; Finch and Mason, 1993; Williams, 2004). So, the group of fathers in the sample who initially stressed their agency in their decisions were not straightforwardly making free-

floating work-centred choices. Their decisions were still rooted in how they thought that they could meet their family and paid work obligations.

'Senior' Fathers: 'I think that I have a significant degree of flexibility in my life, and that has come with seniority.'

The two senior fathers were the smallest group in the sample. Both fathers – Alan and Jonathan – work in the Health Trust. They were the oldest fathers in the study and they both described themselves as having reached relatively senior roles in their organisation, with Jonathan employed as a Consultant and Alan as a Senior Human Resources Advisor. Both fathers are partnered, with their partners in part-time employment. However, the ages of their children differ, with Alan having two teenaged daughters and Jonathan with two daughters aged six and two years.

Discourses of individual agency in negotiating a work/life balance were also evident in the accounts given by the two senior fathers. The senior fathers in the sample differed from the managerial fathers in terms of their qualifications and training. The professional fathers had already completed the bulk of their education before embarking on their careers, with both holding university degrees. They both explicitly stated that they had decided to become fathers at a relatively later age. This father, when asked to reflect on how typical he feels his experiences of combining fathering with working life are amongst fathers' today, responded that he felt that his delaying of fatherhood was not a commonplace practice:

> I think sometimes, people when they have children younger, and I think the father particularly, I think their careers are still developing, whereas my career was, well, settled. It wasn't stopped, it was settled, my career. So my priorities are different so I don't think I'm completely typical of erm, of fathers. I'm typical perhaps of an older father, but not typical...
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

This father feels that there may be difficulties for fathers to manoeuvre if they wish to progress according to the needs of traditional career trajectories, should they wish to try to attempt to negotiate and experience a better work/life balance. These findings may be linked to the perception that taking up flexible working, or asserting the need for time off, is a 'female' issue and would hold back male career progression (Gambles et. al. 2007). Both fathers waited until they were older to become fathers and contrasted themselves with fathers that entered into fatherhood when they were relatively younger who were subject to the demands on their time associated with their developing careers and the constraints that they perceived this as placing upon their fathering. They have made these decisions with reference to the idea of the career and its implicit demands. They felt that career progression was not compatible with fatherhood until they had proven their commitment, accrued workplace benefits such as autonomy, and gained the confidence to assert their needs if they need time off for family circumstances. That some fathers may opt out of demanding careers in order to become more involved with caring for their children has been documented (Gerson, 1997), but in terms of planning their fatherhood around career demands these fathers parallel with Plantin's (2007) Swedish middle class respondents who purposefully concentrated on their careers in their earlier working lives and had planned to become fathers later in their lives. Both fathers provide an interesting contrast with the group of managerial fathers. It is notable that they were not seeking further career progression, and that as one father explained they were 'settled high up' in the Health Trust. However, the senior professional fathers' understandings of their agency in negotiating their work/life balance differed from that of the managerial fathers in one crucial way.

Even though the two fathers who were employed in senior roles felt that they were able to make choices over their work/life balance, the notion of choice that they drew upon in their interview

accounts did not exist in a vacuum. They both explicitly recognised that their seniority helps them to have a better work/life balance:

> *Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't covered in my questions that you still think is important to talk about?*
> I suppose the only thing is that I think that I have a significant degree of flexibility in my life, and that has come with seniority. And it's easier for me. You know, if something, having kids and being flexible has set a limit on my career, there's no doubt about that. That having been going up the senior health service management career path as well as being a clinician, it was clear that wasn't possible without me slashing my wrists. Er, so it's settled in it, but it's settled in it quite a long way up, let's be honest. Erm, and I think that when you have a degree of autonomy in how you work it's much easier to give yourself the flexibility, you know. And I think if I was a Registrar, a Senior House Officer, I would have much less flexibility. Erm (pauses) so I think that having kids late for me has allowed me to be much more of a hands-on father than I would have been able to if I'd done it in my late twenties, early thirties.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

These two fathers both displayed a degree of 'discursive penetration' (Giddens, 1979) of their organisation in their interview accounts in that they recognised how their positions that they had reached in their organisation and the nature of their roles gave them a greater scope to have some autonomy over their working hours. Both fathers were able to schedule in some parts of their work whilst working around what they termed as their 'fixed commitments'. The ability to secure both flexibility and autonomy in working hours has been identified elsewhere as a determinant in fathers' taking up a greater role in caring responsibilities (Gerson, 1997).

Furthermore, these senior fathers' felt more secure and able to make demands for time off work for their family needs. The hospital consultant presented himself as not needing to use the formal flexible working policies of his health trust employer if he felt that he needed to be absent from work for family needs:

> *Do they have family-friendly policies here? So when you take every Thursday off during the school holidays, are you using that?*
> ... what I'm doing is looking at my life, looking at how I can do it without affecting my job. I have enough autonomy that I don't have to wave a policy at somebody... You know, I don't have to fill out a form to say that I'm not going to be here! (laughs) but there is on the other hand, provided the service gets covered by my colleagues, I'm happy to do it. If I'm not here, it doesn't, you know, I don't have to wave a big stick at the Trust to do that.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

The consultant may provide an example of how professional careers can offer the scope to pursue family-friendly specialisms (Crompton, 2001), in this case, in medicine. However, it does not follow that this is typical amongst fathers in professional roles. Although, in line with my findings others have similarly found a group of 'juggling fathers', who, like the two public sector fathers employed in positions of seniority, had made changes to their careers in order to take on greater caring responsibilities (Vincent and Ball, 2006).

Local Authority Fathers: 'Having that balance seems to be impossible in the private sector.'

This group of fathers is comprised of all of the five fathers in the sample who work for the City Council: Daniel, Robert, Ian, Andrew, and George. Their family situations are quite diverse with Ian being a resident step father and George a repartnered lone father; the other three men are partnered fathers. The ages of their children vary with Daniel having young daughters (three years and a six month old infant), Robert also has an eighteen month old son (and a teenaged daughter), George has two adult sons and a six year old daughter, Ian a seven year old daughter, and Andrew two daughters aged eleven and nine years. In terms of their organisational roles, none of these fathers has formal line management responsibilities.

An initial consideration and limitation of the data with regards to the fathers employed in the local authority was that they were employed in desk-based roles, which may be relatively

conducive to flexible working. Fathers did recognise, that those employed in the Council's frontline service roles were affected by overtime working and more senior roles were still affected by a presenteeism culture:

> *So, you've got all these arrangements here, but how do they impact upon working hours in a general way, do they help improve it, or is there a long hours working culture?*
> I think there is still a long hours working culture, specifically in local government again. Now I mean it seems to be across the board, especially at the senior levels. Erm, you know, the salaries are usually built in to say that you know, you don't get paid overtime, but you are expected to, you know, be at the council's beck and call, as it were, for as many hours as they want you there for.
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

Thus, the fathers recognised that they were relatively privileged within their organisation to have access to flexitime. However, it would seem that the fathers saw their access to flexible working as typical among their occupational grades and particular workgroups.

The fathers felt that they were working for a 'family friendly' employer in that their roles had some scope for flexibility. The local authority fathers tended to reinforce their perceptions of how family-friendly the local authority was as an employer by evoking a contrast with their perceptions of the nature of private sector employment:

> *Reflecting on your own experiences of being a father and working, how typical would you say that your experiences are, amongst fathers today?*
> I suppose I'm not typical in that we're very lucky, particularly more lucky than the majority are. I suppose I might be typical amongst fathers in the public sector, but that's a minority there. The majority of fathers will have to work longer hours than myself. So I see myself as atypical and fortunate. In the private sector there seems to be an expectation that you will work late and that you may not see your children every evening. So that lots of fathers may actually get home whilst their children are asleep. The pay is lower here, but they make up for it in that you get a better quality of family life.
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

The fathers' scope for flexibility was not seen as typical for fathers as a whole. This demonstrates that even though the fathers' employed by the local authority were in roles where they had a subjective entitlement for flexibility, that they felt that it remained a relative privilege. In these interviews, fathers retrospectively presented their choices to work for the public sector through an understanding, or perception, of the nature of private sector careers. In particular, they drew comparisons with the presenteeist culture of working in the private sector, which they felt would constrain their availability to spend time with their children. In contrast to the previous group of fathers occupying senior roles, the fathers in the Council are able to utilise formal flexitime policies to negotiate their flexibility with their working hours.

Health Trust Fathers: "... the simple fact is it's a twenty-four-seven service."

This group of fathers who are employed in the Health Trust is comprised of three of the five fathers that were sampled from this organisation (the remaining two fathers were the fathers in senior roles). The three Health Trust fathers are: Philip, Adam and Mark. Two of these fathers are in desk-based roles, with Philip working in Human Resources and Mark in Accountancy. Adam, as a Senior Staff Nurse is involved in the delivery of front line services to patients. Looking at their family situations, all three fathers are partnered and have children that are relatively young, all aged under seven years, with Adam having the youngest children (three years and eighteen months' old). Mark is an adoptive father.

These fathers were similar to the Local Authority men in that they were aware of formal policies, and felt that the Health Trust were a supportive organisation to work for:

> *Do they have family-friendly policies here and flexible working? And is there different options available to people and things like that?*
> The Trust has a much more comprehensive planned flexible working, work/life balance strategy than my last employer. My last employer, I think had almost all of

> the er, erm, facilities in place, but they weren't done as a sort of like a, almost strategic co-ordinated policy, and they are here. And that's a really good thing because using the term 'work/life balance' itself has now, it has a profile within the trust, and people know it's there. I think that's, that's definitely a good balance for what type of employers are. And just simply by having the title 'work/life balance' in your strategies and your policies include it, it makes people aware that your employer has that interest. And I, I must say, I applaud them for that. So, yes it's quite good.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

Two of the three fathers had access to flexible working, and worked flexitime. However, they pointed to operational constraints in their experiences of these policies – namely the 24/7 nature of the organisation:

> *Are you aware of any formal policies that they've got here to help parents with childcare*?
> There is a, erm, a work/life balance policy. Erm, which is available to all people working within the Trust. And obviously people are sort of are free to apply. I know there's some sort of restrictions, obviously. You know because the, going back to what the organisation's all about, it's still a healthcare trust, it's still got to provide services to the patient. You know, you've got to work around that. But there is a formal policy and as far as I'm aware, it is a, I think it's one of the most widely used policies as well.
>
> Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

These fathers viewed working occasional atypical hours as a requirement of their roles and the ways in which this fitted into the functioning of the organisation. There was a degree of scepticism concerning how well the continuous nature Health Trust's operations and service delivery (c.f. Yeandle et. al. 2002) lent itself to flexible working. Here, a discrepancy can be drawn between policies in writing and in practice (Perrons et. al. 2005). These fathers' sense of entitlement to the policies was restricted by a perceived need among fathers to be 'available' at the times that their roles needed them to be there. Thus there was a limited 'buy in' of the flexible working policies that were on offer from these fathers.

Although these three fathers used flexitime to enable them share in the routines of taking children to school, there was a sense in the data of how the fathers' were more cautious about their use of flexibility. In comparison with the other occupational groups in the sample, they constitute a 'halfway- point' between the managerial fathers who tended to not use flexibility, or when they did saw it as a 'perk', and the local authority fathers who did not raise issues with the limitations of their experiences of flexibility.

Car Plant Fathers: 'Even though there's not an official flexible working policy here, the working hours are, you know, I mean, the management's very flexible...'

This group of fathers includes eight of the nine fathers that are employed in the Car Parts Plant (Bill, a Harness Manufacturing Services Manager, was included in the group of managerial fathers). Two fathers, Harry and David are both lone fathers, the remaining six are partnered fathers. These fathers have children of varying ages with Stuart having an eleven month-old daughter and Greg a seventeen month-old daughter (and two other daughters aged twelve and five years). Steve also has a three year-old child, as well as a seventeen year old and an adult child. Three fathers - Joe, Paul, and Colin – have primary school-aged children, another three - Harry, Steve, and David – have adolescent children.

Managers had a crucial role in whether the fathers employed in the Car Parts Plant, would be able to secure work/life balance provisions. These fathers' accounts contrast with both the senior and managerial groups of fathers who couched their work/life negotiations in individual terms, in which they had the agency to either prioritise their career or their family. Managers and line managers played a very prominent role in the Plant fathers' interviews, for it was they who in effect, mediated fathers' access to flexibility over their working hours:

Do they have family-friendly policies here?
Erm, family-friendly. (pauses) I'd say for me now, yes, because if I have any problems then I see my manager, and they allow us like, to work the time back if we need a couple of hours off. And er, if I have a situation where I have to pick my daughter up from school then they allow that.

David, Plant, manual, divorced lone father (18 and 14)

In the absence of formal flexible working arrangements and a lack of awareness of existing legal entitlements, such as the right to request flexible working, these fathers' present their work/life negotiations as much more contingent on external factors, notably their managers agreeing to their requests for time off, or to work time back. This is indicative of how successfully being granted flexibility is heavily dependent upon securing good workplace relationships and expectations about when flexibility would be granted (Dex and Scheibl, 2002).

The majority felt that their manager was supportive of their needs, and they felt able to approach him:

With the working hours here, you can be flexible with, I gather, the start times and finishing times?
There's two start times. You can either work six 'til two thirty, or you can work seven thirty 'til four. One of the two, you either work one shift or the other shift. And you're supposed to work either one or the other and give notice. And its got to be agreed with the manager. But as I say, ... I know my manager, he's like, if you wanted to do one of the six 'til half past two [shifts] for one day because you needed to pick the kids up, you won't have a problem with it. You won't.

Paul, Plant, manual (9 and 8)

It would seem from these accounts that the fathers in the car parts plant were fortunate enough to have, on the whole, a good relationship with their manager. However, there were limits as to how far the fathers' felt able to request time off from their manager. One father in particular felt that he would like to make more requests than he currently does, but feels unable to do this. He describes the great difficulties that his partner faces in finding childcare during the mornings

when she works shifts as a community carer, but he feels that he cannot ask to start work later to help his partner:

> *So how does your wife feel about the childcare that she does?*
> I think she feels a bit under pressure sometimes because. Because I work full-time and I obviously I've got to start work at half-past seven in the mornings, I can't, I couldn't say like twice a week, 'can I come in late this day?' all the time. But what I was saying earlier, they're quite flexible. It's like, when you want these things, you can't, I mean, you can't ask all the time. Otherwise it just becomes, I mean, it's not extreme circumstances, is it? You're expected to work these hours but, but then on a one-off, if you've got something, I mean really stuck with childcare, then that's ok. But I couldn't say twice a week, 'can I have these things off?'
>
> Paul, Plant, manual (9 and 8)

It would therefore seem that in the workplace culture of the Car Parts Plant, that fathers' having time off for family responsibilities is seen as an occasional benefit rather than a right (Lewis, 1997). In this case, the couple are managing these difficulties in isolation, so that his partner pieces together the childcare from a variety of sources, namely friends, neighbours and the children's grandfather. If these are unavailable, his partner is left unable to work. This father would like to work flexi-time, yet there is no formal provision for this in the car-parts plant. Instead, this father feels that they just have to cope as best they can since he is 'expected' to work his hours.

Other studies have similarly identified that some employees are lacking in the confidence to make such requests and even if they do, they may feel guilty (Yeandle et. al. 2003:28). Furthermore, the absence of formal flexible working policies means that this father is lacking in any sense of subjective sense of entitlement to flexibility (Lewis, 1997; Dex and Scheibl, 2002). This contains his sense of dissatisfaction with his working hours. This demonstrates the role of fathers' limited expectations of securing flexibility. Their employer sets their daily hours of paid work (Fagan, 2001a) and fathers act in accordance. The managers in the sample felt that they

were expected to work longer hours to perform in their roles, they internalise it, as part of a decision they made when embarking on a career. However, Car Parts Plant fathers' employers' expectations were not so much internalised. These fathers' working hours were imposed upon them by their employer, but they were not constructing this as their 'choice', it was externally imposed, and they seemingly have to work those hours on a daily basis.

The informal nature of the flexibility of the car-parts plant was emphasised in the interviews. A lot of the flexibility resulted from the manager granting time off, or working hours back on an individual basis. There were other practices that pointed to the informal nature of the leave, such as covering for each other:

> *How about your wife's employers, are they supportive?*
> She works in, er it's a small business. So she feels more (pauses), she feels as if the owners are more dependent on her, than what this company would be on me. Because there's more people here, obviously. If one person's off, yeah, it does have an impact, but there's always someone to cover and you know, help out.
>
> Steve, Plant, manual (20, 17 and 3)

This father appears to be aware that being away from work does have some kind of impact on his colleagues, but that they are prepared to cover for each other to an extent, and so this would make them interlinked with each others' work/life balance. That the car-parts plant was a small-medium site[26] was emphasised as making it informally flexible:

> *Do they have family-friendly policies here? Or any kind of flexible working hours?*
> ... I'm not aware of any family-friendly policies, but I mean I will say that the management on site are pretty flexible and you know, will, you know, will help as much as they can. Because we're a small site, you know, it's pretty flexible, I have to say.
>
> Colin, Plant, manual (9)

[26] Whilst the car-parts plant was by far the smallest site in the study, a multi-national corporation which is a large employer currently owned it.

These fathers' feel that small size of their workplace helps them to have an occasional ad hoc flexibility over their working hours. Others have found that flexibility of this nature relates to the size of their employer in that it can be found in SMEs where informal arrangements are made in the absence of formal policies (Dex and Scheibl, 2001; Ellison et. al. 2009). However, this may be a misleading picture, as a larger site may in fact offer more scope for employees to cover for each other during absences.

What flexibility there is on a daily basis in the Car Parts Plant is heavily gendered. Three fathers spoke of what they termed the 'mothers' shift':

> *Do they have family-friendly policies here?*
> Family-friendly policies?
> *Yes.*
> I don't know. Like for example?
> *Erm, things like flexible working, or job sharing?*
> I don't think there's like an official flexible working really. But the company are pretty flexible anyway, so. I know some of the girls, you know, maybe one of the girls in our department she comes in at nine-thirty, and finishes at four. She says she can put the children to school. That kind of thing. But obviously, she works less hours then, so she gets paid less, anyway, so, you know. But they are flexible in that, in that respect.
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

Even in this instance where there are no formal flexible working policies to be gendered, the informal practices that have emerged are gendered. This shows that the gendered construction of part-time working (cf. Beechey and Perkins, 1987) is a continuing trend. That working reduced hours in the Car Parts Plant, with hours that fit around children's school attendance points to how these arrangements are not considered to be the norm for their male employees. Thus, these fathers are constrained by the assumption that everyday flexibility is for mothers and that men are expected to work the hours set by their employer, with flexibility being an occasional benefit.

Paternity Leave

This section discusses the fathers' experiences of paternity leave. All fathers in the sample took paternity leave which would point to cultural expectations amongst fathers that they should take leave at this time. However, there were variations between the fathers' experiences, which were patterned by their employers. These variations would point to how the fathers' access and take up of leave at this time is limited by what is seen as acceptable within their employing organisation (Dermott, 2001).

Managerial fathers asserted the primacy of their individual agency and that they would decide how much leave they had taken:

> *Did you take any leave for paternity?*
> I've taken paternity on both occasions when the children were born.
> *How long was that for?*
> I think the first one was a week and the second one was two weeks paternity that I was entitled to and I also took an extra couple week's annual leave for the second one. So I actually had a month off.
> *Your entitlement to start with, was that paid or unpaid?*
> Yes, yeah, all paid. I think I can have more if I wanted it, unpaid, but I took it paid.
> *Could there have been any improvements to the leave?*
> Er, not really, no. I mean it was, it was leave that I took off my own back for my own purposes really.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

This stance towards paternity leave may reflect the fathers' seeming agency which conversely places the responsibility upon themselves to negotiate the length of paternity leave that they feel is suitable. These fathers view Paternity leave as being left to the realms of individual choice; one father had relatively recently taken one months' leave, consisting of two weeks' paternity leave and two weeks' of annual leave.

The local authority fathers were largely pleased with their provisions (with the exception of one father who had only taken one days' leave). The fathers working for the Health Trust tended to not raise issues with their experiences:

> *Did you take any paternity leave at all at that time?* [This father and his partner travelled overseas to bring their adopted daughter home].
> ... I think I have had some paternity. She's an adopted child, and so I think I was entitled to a bit of paternity ... It was all paid, it was all paid leave. I'm not sure, I don't, I can't recall the duration of the leave. I think whatever the paternity leave entitlement was erm, five years ago, I had it. Possibly a week, or something, five days holiday... So yeah, the employer's good. You know, as I might have said earlier, the employer erm, was fair and reasonable and I was entirely satisfied with it in that regard.
>
> Mark, HealthTrust, accountant, adoptive father (6)

It is notable that this father is vague as to whether he has taken some paternity leave, and the length of the leave. This shows that even instances where fathers' feel that they are working for a 'good' employer with flexible working practices, they can still remain vague about their entitlements[27]. In these organisations, the fathers' accounts pointed to how taking paternity leave provisions were built into workplace culture as a 'norm' and fathers' felt that they were entitled (Lewis, 1997) to take this leave. This highlights the benefits that formal employer policies can have, in instances where staff have a degree awareness of them, in terms of the type and duration of leave that fathers' take. Furthermore, both groups of fathers emphasised the importance of organisational policy and culture.

The Car Parts fathers who had older children did not raise issues with the length of paternity leave that they had taken – this was prior to the legislative underpinning for paternity leave – as they felt that their three days' entitlement was generous. However, the Car Parts fathers of

[27] This father took paternity leave prior to the introduction of the legal entitlement to two weeks paternity leave. At this time, the Health Trust had a policy in place where fathers were entitled to one week's paternity leave, which this father accessed.

younger children were a notable group in the sample for raising issues with the length of their paternity leave, although this may be partly attributable to the lack of day-to-day flexibility they had over their start and finishing times of work. Some of these fathers had preferences to take a longer period of paid leave so that they could support their partners and build a relationship with infants. The small size of the Car Parts Plant as a workplace could also be constraining these fathers' taking of paternity leave, for instance, they were conscious of not placing 'burdens' on their employer through their absences (c.f. Thompson et. al. 2005). This may explain why this group of fathers who were unhappy with their leave drew a contrast with current maternity leave provisions, which provide mothers a right to a longer period of leave:

> *Is there anything that could be brought in to help you with childcare? Something the government could do, or an employer, or just anything in general?*
> The only thing I would like to see is, possibly when the baby's born, maybe a longer period of time that's paid, to be able to spend with the baby, really. The initial period. And maybe something to make things, you know, when, when your children are little or whatever, things are in black and white, set up by the government to allow you to have time off in that respect, maybe.
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

The Plant fathers did not feel able to approach their manager individually for longer leave. Thus, their workplace context, particularly the absence of flexible working policies which shaped and constrained the fathers' experiences of paid employment, also patterned their experiences of taking paternity leave.

Summary

In this chapter, the ways in which fathers' account for their flexible working practices has been explored. The kinds of questions that were asked to fathers which prompted their responses have been given to provide a sense of the 'co-reconstructed research encounter' in the interviews that shaped the resulting data. Some initial evidence was found in support of Hakim's (2000a) preference theory amongst the fathers in managerial occupations, who spoke of 'managing' their

working days and family time. Whilst the managerial fathers may have worked long hours, stressing their agency through the ways in which they identified it as their 'choice', they made these decisions in a context. These fathers' choices were constrained by the nature of their careers, which demonstrates the need to question accounts which emphasise agency whilst downplaying structural constraints. They felt that their organisations demanded that they work relatively long hours to accomplish their roles satisfactorily. These fathers' felt that they could combine these working hours with fathering, as seen in the man who describes the arrangements he made to watch his son in a rugby match in Belgium whilst he was working overseas. Managerial fathers' felt that it was up to them, as individuals to meet both work and family obligations.

The senior fathers similarly talked about their choices but they explicitly linked their agency and decisions they have made about family and work as a privilege that accompanies their occupational seniority. These fathers' delayed fatherhood in light of the constraints that they perceived organisational careers would place on their availability to care. They felt that they would only have the confidence to take time off for family needs when their careers were settled in relatively senior roles. Fathers recognised that seniority gave them the scope for a degree of autonomy over their working day, which may support a caring role.

Fathers employed in the Local Authority had access to formal flexitime policies which gave them some flexibility over the start and end times of their working days. These fathers may not be typical of fathers across local government, but they felt that using flexitime was an entitlement amongst men in desk-based roles. They provided a contrast to the managerial fathers as they were critical of private sector careers as they felt that they were underpinned by a presenteeism culture would constrain their availability to their families. Fathers saw flexible

working as a 'perk' of working in local government, but it was not the norm for all working fathers. Fathers employed in the Health Trust were aware of the organisation's extensive policies on flexible working and there was some use of flexitime, such as to take children to school. Fathers felt that the scope for flexibility was limited on occasions due to the constant service provision of the Health Trust. Fathers employed in the Car Parts Plant provided a stark contrast to senior fathers, in that they are lacking in autonomy, with their securing of informal *ad hoc* arrangements dependent upon their managers' discretion. These fathers did not stress their agency; instead they situated their experiences within the constraining contexts of their employment, as there was a lack of formal policies to underpin a sense of entitlement to flexible working arrangements. The Car Parts fathers of younger children also expressed their dissatisfaction with the length of their paternity leave. They wanted to take a longer period of leave, and they felt that this should be underpinned by more generous statutory provisions for fathers, as they felt that there were disparities with the length of maternity leave that mothers were entitled to take. Having found a patterning in the sample in terms of how fathers' account for their work/life practices with reference to how they negotiate what they perceive to be both the constraining and enabling elements of the organisational working culture, we turn to finding out what impact these may have on fathers' engagements with care.

7.
Fathers' Engagement in Childcare

Introduction

Following on from the previous chapter where occupational differences were found with regard to fathers' temporal relationship with employment, particularly with regards to their capacity to have some flexibility over their start and finishing times of their day-to-day working schedule and in the types of leave fathers took for family needs, this chapter addresses fathers' experiences of and engagement with care. Thus, it will be possible to explore whether fathers' employment experiences impact upon their caring relationship with children. This chapter addresses the second research question, which focuses upon fathers' childcare roles, and how they engage with care on an everyday level, with particular reference to the ethics of care and previous conceptualisations of father involvement.

The chapter opens with an overview of the questions that fathers were asked in the childcare section of the interviews. This is accompanied by some reflections on the use of these questions and the resulting data, as well as a discussion on how alternative research methods would have created a different picture of fathers' involvement. An overview of the caring tasks that fathers described undertaking in their accounts are provided, and these are unpacked with illustrative data from the interviews to gain a richer understanding. As a result of the sampling strategy and for clarity, the care that fathers undertook has been broken down into three different age ranges: infants and preschool children, younger school-aged children, and adolescents. However, it should be noted that the sample was not clear-cut in terms of the fathers having children that fell neatly into one age group.

Where children fell into two age groups, the fathers' accounts have been considered under both categories, in relation to the child that they are discussing in the interview. Some findings that cross-cut fathers' care by age of children are that fathers' reported engagement with care occurs at certain times, and that there are times when their involvement is lower. However, there are notable exceptions in the data, particularly the lone fathers and the 'shift parents' who were characterised by a more constant level of involvement, but for the majority of fathers their involvement with care was temporally mediated as certain times are prioritised for care. Having outlined this chapter, we turn to an overview of the interview questions which prompted the fathers' responses, and some reflections on the use of semi-structured interviews.

The Interviews and Some Reflections on Research Methods

Prior to providing an overview of the care that fathers provide to infants and pre-school aged children, a brief account of the questions asked to fathers in the interviews about childcare activities is provided. The childcare section of the interviews all opened by asking fathers to describe their level of involvement in the things that they do for children, in a typical day. To account for variations in fathers' involvement, there were follow-up questions which asked fathers to go through the sorts of things that they would do for children during a typical week, as well as asking about whether fathers felt there was any variation between what they would do on weekends and weekdays. This was followed by a more general question to capture variations in father involvement which asked fathers to consider whether there were any times when they had done more things and fewer things for their children. By keeping this question so open, it was hoped that fathers would consider wider circumstances that they were under such as annual holidays, partners' illness, and a busy workload. Once fathers had discussed the range of care tasks that they carry out, they were asked about how they felt about the things that they did for their children and the relationship that they have with them. Following this, the men were then

asked whether anything could be brought in to help them, as fathers, such as government or employer assistance.

Fathers who had older children, or who had a younger child and an older child, were then asked a series of questions about whether their involvement with children has varied with their age. There were prompts that asked fathers to reflect on the sorts of tasks that they carried out early on in their children's lives, when they were toddlers, nursery school-aged, and at primary school. As with the earlier set of questions about childcare, once the fathers had spoken about the care that they provided at these different developmental stages, they were then asked how they felt about their relationships with children at these stages. This was followed by another section which elicited responses from the fathers concerning the childcare that their partners carry out. As with the first section which asked fathers about their involvement in childcare, they were asked to discuss the things that their partners do for children during a normal day, week, and whether there were any variations in partners' involvement in childcare. There were further questions which explored how the fathers perceived their partners to feel about the things that they did for children, and how the men perceived their partners to feel about the things that they, as fathers, did. However, this was not taken as a straightforward indicator of what the fathers' thought that their partners' thought, but rather to explore what the fathers' reported that their partners' thought. The fathers were then asked how supportive their partners' employers were if they needed time off for care purposes, or whether there was the scope to have flexibility with working hours. In this section, there were questions about whether there were any daily routines with managing both work and childcare, and whether these routines were shared. The fathers were then asked about whether their partners feel that there could be more things to support them, such as government or employer provisions. The section of the interviews ended with

some questions about which partner cares for children when they are unwell, and during school holiday times.

The interview schedule contained some questions about their use of outside help with childcare, whether formal services, such as nurseries, crèches, childminders, school breakfast clubs, or more informal help such as family and friends. Where these were used, fathers were asked about their benefits and drawbacks, as well as a further prompt about whether any other childcare was used in the past and how this had worked out. This provided some further information upon daily routines, both in the present and the past. A final, stocktaking, question that was asked of all fathers at the end of the interviews was about whether or not they felt that things are improving for fathers.

The overview provided of the childcare section of the interviews demonstrates how the data collection of the childcare tasks and activities that fathers report carrying out were elicited through open-ended questions. The use of this questioning ties in with one of the methodological aims of this study which is to gather men's own accounts of their fathering practices. Thus, through asking open-ended questions, fathers were able to provide their accounts, whilst the questions ensured that they maintained a focus upon addressing the underpinning research objectives. This did succeed, as I was able to gain some rich narratives from the fathers where they talked about their involvement in care, their feelings about this, and their reflections about how fathering adapts to children's developmental needs. This resulting data is quoted throughout this chapter, and its depth was a strength of utilising this approach to questioning, and the semi-structured interview method itself. However, the disadvantages were that the fathers had to rely upon their memory to answer these questions and that some tasks would have been overlooked with this. Therefore, the fathers were providing accounts of the tasks that were strongly

remembered, and were therefore more salient to their understanding of their fathering role. A different approach would have yielded a different picture of father participation. For example, I could have utilised cards which listed tasks, such as those included by Palkowitz (1997) in his conceptualisation of paternal involvement, in the interviews to prompt fathers to consider a wider selection of tasks, which they could have then talked about. This would have probably provided a more thorough overview of the tasks that the fathers undertook, but the time spent on this in the interviews may have impacted upon the richness of the fathers' accounts, particularly in the interviews in the two private sector employers where I aimed to conduct each of the interviews in half an hour.

Another approach could have been to have interviewed the fathers' partners in addition to the fathers. This would have given a more rounded picture to the nature of fathers' involvement in tasks, as it may have been that fathers could have exaggerated what they did in their accounts. In relying upon the fathers as the sole rapporteurs of their roles, the data cannot be checked in this way to see if fathers' accounts correspond with their partners' descriptions. However, in practice, it would have been challenging to have also interviewed their partners as in conducting four case studies of employers which situate the fathers in their organisational contexts, I had to negotiate my access to fathers several times in each organisation. Having to then obtain access to their partners would have added an additional layer with which to negotiate research access. Therefore, although the fathers' accounts cannot be 'verified' in relation to their partners, and this is a limitation of the approach used in the study, it should be remembered that the study design does situate fathers in their organisational contexts and the ways in which these facilitate and constrain fathers' work/life negotiations. That being said, it would have strengthened the research design further to have interviewed the partners as it would have provided further

information upon their care and household arrangements, which could have been used to further contextualise the fathers' accounts.

Fathers of Infants and Pre-School Children

Overview of Fathers' Care

Eight of the fathers in the sample had children aged under five years. This group is comprised of: two fathers from the Local Authority, two from the Health Trust, three from the Plant, and one from the Communications Company. The task that featured most heavily in these fathers' accounts was playing with children; this was particularly marked amongst the three Plant fathers. Feeding and bathing children were mentioned, although for the Plant fathers, feeding was a more popular task than bathing, whereas both of the fathers in this group employed by the Local Authority undertook bathing, as did the one Communications father and one of the Health Trust fathers. Putting children to bed and attending to children during the night were both carried out by three fathers, one each from the Local Authority, Health Trust and Communications Company. Taking and collecting children from childcare was a relatively less popular task amongst these eight fathers, as only two fathers employed in the public sector reported carrying out these tasks.

In terms of these fathers' partners' working hours, four fathers had partners who worked part-time, two worked reduced hours, one worked full-time, and one was not currently employed. Therefore, in this small group of eight fathers, their partners had diverse employment situations. In the interviews with the fathers with partners who worked part-time, playing with children was a prominent task. However, it was notable in the data that bathing children was a less popular task with these fathers, although the fathers whose partners worked full-time, reduced hours, and

the one father whose partner was not in paid work all bathed children. The same pattern also occurs in the accounts given by fathers in relation to feeding infants and pre-school children.

Fathers' Accounts of Care

There were only five fathers of infants in the sample, and so the findings and interpretations are by necessity tentative, but nevertheless some interesting results emerged. One father recognised that it was important for him to be involved with his daughter, although he expressed his involvement by reference to playing and a willingness to 'spend time' together:

> *How do you feel about the things that you do with your daughter?*
> ... she [his daughter] understands obviously, you know, what parents are and that kind of thing. I think she likes to play and I think, well I think in the long-term, obviously it will be beneficial because er, well with children, babies, they know what's going on. They know who's who. They know who's playing with them. They know who's willing to spend time with them.
>
> Stuart, Plant (11 months)

The fathers of younger children tended to describe the care that they provided in the evenings, when they were asked in the interviews about the things that they would do with infants during a 'typical' day. Putting children to bed and associated tasks such as bathing and reading bedtime stories – what one father termed as 'bedtime rituals' - were popular care-giving tasks. In some instances fathers couched their participation in these tasks in terms of 'helping' partners, by acting as 'assistants' to mothers whilst they are around:

> ... I'll help get the kids ready for bed. Bath my daughter and maybe wash her, and er, read her a story and put her to bed. And obviously then, my wife will go to work about nine o'clock.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> We take it in turns to go in the bath with her as well. So my wife might go in the bath with her one night, I'll go in the bath with her another night.
>
> Stuart, Plant (11 months)

> There are tasks that we share. So I would help with the cleaning, and help with bathing the baby.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

A few fathers described how they were responsible for attending to younger children during the night if they are not sleeping, or to feed an infant. In one case, night time care was described as the father's sole responsibility, whereas in others it was shared between partners, such as when one partner was working night shifts:

> If they're getting up in the middle of the night, that's my job... But the childcare stuff has not fallen anymore on her than me. And she gets considerably more sleep than I do (laughs).
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

> ... my wife will go to work about nine o'clock and erm, you know, any fall-out in the night, if she's waking up, playing up, or whatever then I, I'm the one that's going to deal with that.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> ... in the middle of the night, I share that feed. We alternate over who does the feed in the morning at five o'clock, so the next day; she'll do the feed. And we've done that for over three years now. So in that way, I feel that I do do more than other fathers, in that I will get up in the middle of the night to do a feed. And I'll get up early in the morning three or four times a week. So on those mornings, I'll spend about two and a half hours to three hours in the mornings doing this.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

However, by no means all of the fathers of children in their early years mentioned the undertaking of night time care in their accounts. In these instances, helping their partners has a different meaning, that fathers undertake less tasks overall than mothers, but they hold responsibility for some caregiving tasks.

When asked for their feelings about the care that they provide for their infants, three fathers expressed a degree of ambivalence about their relationship with children. Although they were

performing some routine care, they feel, to varying degrees, that their relationships have not fully developed:

> ... I'm not so involved with the baby. I interact with her, and play and sit with her. And in the middle of the night, I share that feed. We alternate over who does the feed in the morning at five o'clock, so the next day she'll do the feed. And we've done that for over three years now. So, in that way, I feel that I do more than other fathers, in that I will get up in the middle of the night to do a feed... I'll interact with our children, especially the oldest one as she's more fun and she doesn't cry and poo everywhere like what the baby does... I do spend more time with our three-year old. And I'm sure that once the baby gets older I will spend more time with her too. I think it's that women just have more of an attachment to babies, possibly? Men tend to like bigger kids, as we're on more of the same wavelength with them.
>
> Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

Although this father describes the direct care he carries out with his daughter, in that he alternates with his partner over the early morning feed, it does not follow that he has a clear sense of his bond with the child. These fathers of infants expected to establish a fuller relationship with children as they became older when they felt that they would become more responsive (c.f. Lupton and Barclay, 1997; Lewis, 1986) or what the fathers termed 'playful' and 'fun'. Fathers' understandings of their relationships with infants demonstrate the importance of interacting through play for fathers' capacity to feel a fuller relationship with their children. Drawing upon Backett (1982:76) this father would seem to be providing an example of an assertion that his involvement with his daughter will increase as she develops in order to maintain a belief in mutual parental involvement. Although he is open about his lesser involvement with his infant daughter, he attempts to soften his unequal care of her by arguing that he will be better able to interact with her when she is older.

Another of the two fathers of infants both employed in the Local Authority also felt that mothers were somehow 'better' at caring for children during infancy when they reflected upon how they

felt about the care tasks that they carried out. These sentiments appeared to be underpinned by a biological reasoning. A mother was seen as the parent who should calm a crying infant:

> ... we have our own set of responsibilities and they are shared between us fairly equally. But then, I think it's natural for his mother to be more involved when my son is upset about something. She's just better at it than what I am. And there's just more expectations for a mother to be there when tears are involved.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

Both fathers anticipated that they would become more confident when their children grow older as they would have more opportunities to interact together and to develop a fuller relationship. The ways in which these fathers presented their relationships with infants would seem to indicate that their gender inhibits them. This mirrors observations made about 'emotion work' where men see women as 'naturally' better at its performance. Other studies of fathering have similar findings (Plantin et. al. 2003; Doucet, 2006). This also provides an example of the men's agentic explanations of the constraints upon their fathering practices, in that they identify mothers as being more attached to babies and as the more competent carers. This may relate to what Giddens (1984) termed a 'material constraint' where by agents are constrained by the physical capacities of the human body, in this case, childbearing, but also the socially and culturally constructed bonds that mothers are perceived to have with children as a result.

Fathers of Primary School-aged Children's Care

Overview of Fathers' Care

There were twelve fathers of primary school-aged children – half of the sample. This includes six fathers split equally between the two public sector employers, two from the Communications Company and four employed in the Car Parts Plant. Playing and time spent together with children in outside activities emerged as the most popular activities amongst these fathers in their interview accounts. Playing with children was emphasised in all of the fathers from the private

sector's accounts. Doing outside activities with children was a marked feature of both the Plant fathers' and the fathers from the public sector organisations' interviews. Collecting children from school was a popular task amongst the Plant fathers, but less so amongst the other fathers in the sample. In contrast, at the start of the day, five out of the six fathers employed in the public sector reported taking their children to school. Ferrying children to activities, which was described by the fathers as typically taking place during late afternoons, early evenings and weekends was a feature of the private sector fathers' accounts – it is notable that they ferried children at these times. Amongst the three Health Trust fathers, putting children to bed was a popular caregiving task, but this was absent in the interviews with the Plant fathers. Similarly, the small group of fathers that spoke of going to children during the night were all employed in the public sector. Overall, it was notable in the interview data that the public sector fathers placed less of an emphasis upon playing with children (although outside activities with children did figure) and more upon taking children to school in the morning and caregiving activities in the evenings. Playing was a stronger feature of the private sector fathers' interviews, as was ferrying children during the later day and weekends.

In terms of the fathers' partners' working hours, reduced hours was the most popular arrangement (four mothers), followed by working part-time and full-time which both had three mothers doing this, one mother was not in paid employment and another was a student. The one father whose partner was not in paid employment had a relatively low involvement in practical caregiving tasks, although he did ferry his daughter and spent time together with her in outside leisure activities. Playing was the most popular task amongst fathers, but it was not patterned by their partners' employment. Getting children ready for school, taking them to school, and collecting from childcare were popular tasks amongst the three fathers with partners in full-time

employment. The accounts given by fathers whose partners worked reduced hours placed an emphasis upon spending time with children in outside leisure.

Fathers' Accounts

Some of the fathers of school-aged children under ten years described that they get children ready for school and take them there, or to breakfast clubs, when they were asked about their roles in day-to-day work and care routines. It is notable that the provision of this care involves daily negotiations with the times that schools and childcare open and close and the times of parents' paid employment. In two instances, fathers alone were responsible for this care – one was facilitated by a partner's longer daily commute to work, whilst the other by his partner's preferences. In the other cases, morning care was more shared between partners, but fathers' involvement was still influenced by partner's work needs:

> I work so close to my home, and where my son goes to school, you know... And my wife actually starts work before me so she leaves. So I have to get him up and, er, you know, get him ready for school and then I take him to a childcare centre then before he goes to school. So that's probably not typical. It's probably more typical for the, the woman, I would think to do that, you know.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

> In term-time, get up with the kids, give them breakfast. Get them dressed. It's usually more me than my wife, because she's not good in the mornings. Erm, I'll take the older one to school three to four mornings a week, and the younger one to nursery - the three mornings she goes. I do the school pick up and the run three days a week. Normally Thursday is one of those. I suppose in the school, do the school pick up two days a week, erm and then on those two days it's the after-school care and stuff like that. You don't get home 'til about six.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

Some of these fathers also collected children from school, or from their after-school club – again this care tends to occur in response to their partner's working hours:

> ... we finish early on a Friday which is good, so, you know, we finish at twelve thirty on a Friday, so it's er, pretty good. So, again, as I say, I can pick him up from school on Friday.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

Fathers who worked flexible hours in the public sector, such as this stepfather, were particularly able to have a strong involvement in morning routines in the absence of their partners through their paid work commitments:

> ... if it's a school day, it's a case of one or the other of us will do the same. If one is doing one task, the other will fill in with the other task. So, on a school morning, Marie [his stepdaughter] will need to be breakfasted, made sure that she's presentable for school, and she's clean and tidy, and so on. So, all the tasks involved in that one or the other of, Alice [his partner] or myself will do that... The end of the working day would be: I would finish at a certain time, a few minutes later I would pick up Alice from her work, and we would go to pick up Marie from after-school club, and then go home. That particular sequence, sometimes that changes. If Alice's got a particularly demanding day, I'll leave here and I'll get Marie from after-school club, we'll go home, and then Alice will come home from there. But these probably would be the closest things to a routine.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

In these instances, mothers' absences through paid work can help to facilitate fathers' responsibilities for providing care (Doucet, 2006; Gerson, 1997; Dienhart and Daly, 1997). There were a few fathers who did not take or collect their children from school on a regular basis, as their partners were able to carry out this task. However, some of these fathers would take or collect their children from organised activities:

> ... Saturday mornings is taken up with swimming lessons. Thursday afternoon in the week is, we go to a tutor for maths my oldest daughter... my oldest daughter goes swimming on a Monday as well.
>
> Greg, Plant (17 months, 12 and 5)

These activities are largely for educational purposes, so the fathers' are ferrying children to activities which can have positive outcomes and serve to promote children's learning. These activities occurred during weekdays and also on weekends.

Playing with children emerged as the most popular activity amongst fathers of children aged under ten years, when they were asked about the things that they would do with their children on a 'typical' day. It was a prominent task which fathers talked about in the interviews, and this was regardless of their involvement in routine caregiving. Playing frequently occurred in the weekday evenings:

> ... as regards coming home, erm, you sit down, you have a bit of tea or what have you with the kids, erm, might play some games, what have you. Erm, it all depends really. I suppose a typical, I suppose it's just, you know, playing with the kids at the end of the day.
>
> Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

Fathers' play involved activities such as games. Computer games were quite popular amongst fathers of young male children, as were more sports- based activities that took place outside of the home:

> ... I would er play games with him. You know, quite often on the computer or on his erm, game cube, you know, that. We enjoy playing that, like. Er, in this sort of weather, we'll go out in the garden maybe, or we'll have a game of tennis or a game of kick a football around. Erm, or go for a walk, you know, yeah. That sort of thing.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

The prominence given to play by fathers relates to their enjoyment of fathering, as their feelings of enjoyment were often linked by the fathers themselves to the times that they spent engaging in play activities. This man, who had previously been a lone father of two sons, but had since repartnered and fathered a six-year old daughter, when asked about how he felt about fathering, brought playing and the pleasure that he found to the fore:

> Having another youngster to play with, doing childish things with [sic] is fantastic. It keeps me young, so it's fantastic. I really enjoy it.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

Play enabled fathers to bond with children. They recognised their companion role, as 'playmates' (Dienhart and Daly, 1997) that they had with children as they 'spent time' together. Playing is seen by these fathers of young children as a means to have close contact, which furthers their sense of connectedness with children (Brandth and Kvande, 1998; also Lewis and Walsh, 2005; and Doucet, 2006).

Fathers of Older Children's Care

Overview of Fathers' Care

In this section the findings concerning the care that fathers of older children aged twelve and over are elucidated. Eleven out of the twenty-four fathers had children that fell into this age group. There were only two fathers from the public sector with older children in the sample – one each from the Health Trust and Local Authority. Four out of the five fathers from the Communications Company are included in this section, as are five of the nine fathers employed in the Car Parts Plant. In the qualitative analysis it emerged that the tasks that these fathers carried out stand in marked contrast to that which the fathers of the younger children undertook, although there are similarities in that seven of the fathers – mostly the Plant fathers and fathers from the Communications Company – have a role in transporting children to organised activities and four fathers ferried children to friends' homes.

It appeared that fathers were able to legitimate their greater involvement when children were older as they described a range of tasks to which they felt able to contribute. Ferrying to friends' homes was undertaken by both fathers from the public sector (both fathers had adolescent daughters) and two from the Communications Company. Fathers viewed themselves as playing a

guiding role with older children, although fathers had slightly differing understandings of the nature of this relational care, as captured in the three codes that emerged from the fathers' accounts of their relationships with adolescents and the care that they provide, during the qualitative analysis: instilling values, providing guidance, and keeping on track. Instilling values captures instances in the interview data where fathers felt that they played a role in influencing children's attitudes at this stage in their development, this involved explaining beliefs and actions. Providing guidance was a slightly looser form of relational care than instilling values, as fathers recognised that children would not necessarily accept their guidance (whereas fathers hoped that children would come to share their values) but they felt it was important that they should offer it. Fathers spoke of 'keeping children on track'; this was in terms of their educational progress, and involved asking children about their homework and attending parents' evenings. These differing emphases given by fathers will be discussed further in the next section, by drawing upon the interview data. Helping children with homework was another task that five fathers undertook; particularly the Plant fathers, and it shares similarities with their guidance role in terms of children's educational outcomes.

A further three codes that would not initially appear to be concerned with care have also been included, as fathers spoke of the differing relationship that they had with children as they developed. This is captured in the three codes: independence, teens' social lives and lesser involvement. In instances in the data where fathers spoke of adolescents becoming independent, the code 'independence' was assigned, sometimes fathers were more specific about children's independence by talking about how they spent what they perceived to be more time with their friends, as captured in the code 'teens' social lives'. Where fathers talked about their relationship with adolescents, particularly by contrasting it by reflecting upon their involvement with children when they were younger, the code 'lesser involvement' was utilised, where fathers felt that they

spent less time present with children. The accounts given by the Communication Company fathers were notable for the emphasis that they placed upon their lesser involvement and adolescents' independence.

Working part-time and reduced hours were the most popular arrangements amongst these fathers' partners. One father in this group had a partner who worked full-time (working full-time was relatively more common amongst the partners who had primary-school aged children). It is notable that this father did not talk about children's independence, their social lives, or having a lesser involvement. Instead, this father placed more of an emphasis in his account upon supervising homework, instilling values, providing guidance, and keeping his children 'on track'. Fathers with partners working reduced hours reflected more upon their lesser involvement and children's growing independence, although three of these fathers enjoyed time spent together in outside leisure with children. Ferrying children to activities was a particular feature of the interviews with fathers whose partners worked part-time, as was helping with homework and instilling children with values (none of the fathers with partners working reduced hours drew upon these two facets of care in their interviews).

Fathers' Accounts of Care

The nature of fathers' involvement changes, as children get older and moved into teenage years. When they were asked about how the nature of their care has changed as children develop, these fathers recognised that their relationships with children are not centred around undertaking physical care giving tasks and spending time playing together, as they were when their children were younger:

> When they're younger you do younger things, you go to like erm, a lot more theme parks, and erm, play areas and things like that when they're toddlers. A lot more sort of erm, friends' parties when they have like erm, like erm, at the Charlie Chalk factories and things like that. You know, so we don't do that anymore, the things we

> tend to do now are more erm, going with them to do something or to see something, whereas a lot of it was play when they were younger, obviously.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

Fathering occurred more in response to the needs that children themselves initiated:

> But really, erm, I particularly liked reading to them and playing games with them, but as they get older they don't necessarily want to do that with you. It's dictated to by them really, not us! (laughs)
> *Ah! (laughs)*
> (laughs) That's the way it happens!
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

This father would seem to be going through a change in his relationship with his children, particularly his oldest child, whereby he is more 'accessible' to them (Lamb et. al. 1985), as his comment "it's dictated to by them really, not us!" captures. Swedish time use data lend support to this interpretation, as fathers have been found to become more accessible or available to children during adolescence (Chuang et. al. 2004), being there until children would like involvement. Fathers' role in providing care changing in response to children's developmental needs is a central aspect of 'fatherwork' (Dollahite et. al. 1997). Fathers' accounts point to an understanding of fathering as a dynamic relationship with children whereby children's development necessitates differing care needs to which fathers recognise the need to accordingly adjust.

Fathers still felt that they were able to play a crucial role during these years, when they were asked about how they felt about the things that they did for their children. One father even felt that his involvement was more important during his children's adolescence since these years would shape who they became in their adulthood. Others felt that they needed to keep their children 'on track' by attending parents' evenings at schools and in setting boundaries for their children's behaviour and in explaining these boundaries to them. Although fathers stressed their

role in facilitating children's growing independence, they were also keen to maintain a sense of connectedness with children during adolescence. Fathers are seeking to provide care at a stage of children's lives that are characterised by 'contradictions', as they seek to find an appropriate balance between children's autonomy whilst ensuring that they kept their connectedness (Solomon et. al. 2002). Fathers of adolescents tended to place great importance on the teenage years as being crucial in their child's development, notably their social development and the values that they hold:

> ... I believe that a happy childhood will make a happy adult. And I believe the years from eleven 'til nineteen are really important in a child's life. Because that's when we sort of decide on what we're going to be, we start noticing influences of society, and that's when we take notice of the things that are around us. Those eight years.
>
> Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

> It's very tempting just to think, it's their age, they'll grow out of it. But we've always been of the opinion that erm, children don't usually grow out of things. You usually train them out of things, or direct them towards being more productive and finding their own feet, and finding their own levels of what they're going to do. But they don't usually just end up there by chance. Erm, it's usually somebody that's going to influence them. And it's either their friends at school, or it's you as parents. And you've got the choice, really!
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

This father continues to explain how he has felt the need to 'reason' with his three teenaged children:

> ... we've just found the need to just sort of clamp down on them more, and be, be stricter with them. Explain the reasons why we're asking them to do the things – why. Again, a lot of their friends roam the streets of an evening after school, and we're, we're not keen on that. And that takes a lot of reasoning with kids, to understand why they're not out, wandering. I think they spend a lot of time with other teenagers and when they're in school the scope of attitudes and opinions of other parents varies so much that sometimes perhaps you have to er, you know, you notice that the kids starting to er, adopt erm, attitudes and ideals that may be a bit further out from your own. And you want to spend a bit more time with them, reinforcing the reasons why erm, you know, life in the house is as it is, and perhaps those bigger sort of er, responsibilities in the community then. And as I say, not all people see the need to do it, and sometimes it rubs off on the kids. And at this sort of age, we, we have found that, you know, they do need a bit, a bit more direction.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

This care is provided for children for their present needs in terms of 'negotiating' parent-teen relationships (Jones and Wallace, 1992) but also in terms of their future, in that fathers hope that children will come to share their values and beliefs. Fathers' undertaking of this care would seem to reflect this point. Teaching children wider values is a form of nurturance (Cohen, 1993), but it does not follow that mothers fail to undertake this care (Brannen et. al. 1994). Teaching children appropriate values is a relatively less time-intensive form of care, with links to a paternal disciplinary role (Ferri and Smith, 1996) which shares similarities with traditional understandings of fathering roles. Thus this care corresponds with holding an overarching responsibility for children (Lewis and Welsh, 2005). Fathers of adolescents constructed their caring practices as being congruent with the 'discourse of individuation' (Brannen et. al. 1994), but within this, fathers were seeking to balance connectedness and to encourage children's growing sense of independence.

However, fathers also negotiate their roles with reference to more traditional notions of fathering, such as disciplining children, which shows that their practices have some continuity with previous generations of fathers. However, these fathers did not talk about the role of tradition in shaping their fathering practices but, in terms of structure and agency, the ways in which structure is downplayed in their negotiation of their practices is curious. There were only two instances in the data where fathers talked about tacit stocks of knowledge that their partners possessed in relation to parenting skills. Both were raised in the interviews by fathers of adolescent children, and relate to how their partners employment in children's services has provided them with what the fathers identify to be greater abilities to parent, through the knowledge and previous experience with children that they have accumulated:

How does your wife feel about the childcare that she does?
Erm, I think my wife will probably think she's nothing exceptional, er tries to meet all the needs of the home. Probably her work background means her focus is on child development er, how she interacts with them and um, makes her evaluate and ensure the children get what we believe is best for them basically, in their department from personal to educational, you know.

Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

How about your wife, what sorts of things does she do with your three children?
She's always had vastly er, superior, er, store of things to do with them. She, she works as a sign language communicator now, but er, she was trained as a nursery nurse. So erm, before we had our three children she'd already worked with and lived in three different, three different households. And so, er, our three children weren't like they're having her first children. And that she's always, she always had the all, all the tricks up her sleeve to keep them occupied. And er, activities, creative activities. You know, it was her job before. So erm, she's always sort of practiced that on, on our own kids. And but yeah, she does a lot, she still does a lot with them now... I think because she's learnt, she hasn't just learnt it over by experience, she's learnt through education. So, you know, through her own studies, what works and what doesn't work. Erm, so it's almost as if she's like one step ahead in a lot of things! And I'm sort of trailing behind, you know, she, she's, she's always got like er, firm ideas on what, what we should be doing with them. Erm, and in some ways I've had to fit in with her ideas, but then acknowledging the fact it's because she's seen them erm, working and playing with other people in the past.

Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

Both these fathers' descriptions of how their partners have learnt childcare competencies and the ways in which they feel that they defer to their partners' knowledge provides a contrast with the accounts given by the fathers of infants. Earlier in the chapter it was seen that the fathers of infants felt that their involvement in care was constrained by their partners' innate abilities to care for infants. However, in these two instances, it is that their partners have learnt parenting through prior experiences and fathers identify this as inhibiting their capacity to negotiate with their partners. Both fathers do not feel that they are on an equal position with which to negotiate care with their partners.

Other fathers spoke of having a looser, general interest in children, whereby they had conversations about their days, when they described the things that they did with children on a 'typical' day. Fathers had a view to find out whether children had done necessary tasks:

> I check out how they all seem, how they're feeling. And what they've done. I also spend time with my daughter. And I check that they've done what they've needed to do during the day.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

> ... just making sure in general that they're on track and they're not taking off, losing focus of the school environment, basically. Erm, we'll attend the parents' evening for them to understand where they're at so we know what, you know. We just keep an eye on them, erm, not on top of them, but just ensuring they're on the right track basically.
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

In response to a question which asked fathers to reflect upon the care that they carried out for children when they were younger, and how this compares with what they do now, fathers' responses rested upon an understanding of their present relationships with children in terms of providing guidance. Fathers recognised that they gave their children guidance, but this was now in the hope that they would be able to trust them to act accordingly:

> I mean, you're just supposed to guide them, really, towards, towards that as best you can, really.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

> ... when they were younger although I'm not so needed now I used to play games with them. And I also used to help them with their schoolwork... don't know really. I suppose it's all just things that you do as a parent. I mean now, we do not push them, they're independent. And their reliance on you diminishes. You can hope that they're doing what they should be doing, but then once they're over eighteen, it becomes their decision.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

These fathers view adolescence as a crucial time of socialisation, and they attached importance on helping or 'guiding' children through this time. It may appear that children become independent in a physical sense, yet fathers placed considerable value on emotionally nurturing children.

When fathers were asked to talk about how they felt about the things that they did for their children, their children's gender seemed to have some impact on how some, but by no means all of the fathers anticipated their relationships with their children to develop. This was as they grew older, particularly as they entered adolescence:

> ... Men tend to like bigger kids, as we're on more of the same wavelength with them. But, not so much when they're teenagers, I expect that I'll be out of the loop since they're both girls. So age does affect it, for me it will be like a bell-curve.
>
> Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

> I'm sure that will be different as she grows up and as she gets older that it will be a totally different relationship that I have with her, than what I had with the boys as they were growing up. I'm sure she'll get – we're really close now – but I'm sure she'll get closer to her Mum as she grows older. You know, the more, I don't want to sound sexist here, but the more girly things that they have to do when they're growing up, that she would perhaps speak to her Mum about, rather than come to Dad. Erm, puberty and stuff like that, I'm sure she'll go to Mum rather than Dad, so I think that will be the difference.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

Another father identified these dynamics occurring in the relationship between his two teenaged daughters and their mother. These fathers identified this relationship as being very important for daughters:

> This is the usual thing, I mean, sort of the gender thing where they have er, they are, they have a very good relationship. They also, they talk to her, I think more as, as, you know, as er woman-to-woman really, than I do. So er, that's quite good. And er, she has a very good relationship with them in that respect. They do have quite a good rapport.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

These accounts highlight how father-daughter relationships in adolescence can change as embodiment becomes much more of a prominent issue (Doucet, 2006). The primary caregiving fathers in Doucet's study emphasised their physical distance from their daughters as they felt hesitant about hugging them. In contrast, the fathers in this research did not talk about physical

distance, rather, they emphasised how they could not necessarily relate to and provide daughters with emotional guidance about all of their experiences during adolescence. In these instances, it would appear that fathers both experience and have expectations of 'silences' (Jamieson, 1999) with teenaged daughters and for mothers to perform this emotion work. This is indicative of the routine emotional care that mothers provide during adolescence (Brannen et. al. 1994). In this study, fathers felt that mothers' performance of this care came to prominence with regard to daughters. In this light, the fathers' relationships with their daughters during adolescence provides a clear example of how fathers' accounts can stress separation and differentiation with children, whereas they saw mothers as maintaining a sense of connectedness and emotional closeness with daughters (c.f. Parke, 1996). This also resonates with the traditional notions of fathering discussed earlier, and that here, these notions were identified by the fathers as placing some constraints upon their relationships with teenaged daughters.

Children's independence was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Fathers talked at length at how their children become independent and how this affects their relationship with them. Fathers who had children aged around eight to ten years tended to talk of their children 'doing their own thing' and needing less supervision, as this father of two daughters – one with a disability – reflects upon caring for his children in the absence of any respite care services:

> *Is there anything that you ever would consider using, if it ever became available? Or anything ideally that you'd choose?*
> We would like to see sort of respite care, so that we could have the occasional sort of weekend free. But that is (pauses). Now that they're older... we do get breaks and they go off and do their own thing, you know. We can sit in the house and they'll be in the garden all day, and generally not bother us. But when they were younger, when they were always around your feet, we would have liked the occasional sort of respite care, which I don't think was available at the time.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

Other fathers felt that as children developed their own circle of friends who they spent time with, they got to spend less time with them:

> *How about the weekdays and the weekends, do they vary quite a lot in terms of what you would do?*
> Yeah. Erm, I normally don't get home 'til about six, seven o'clock in the evenings. And by that time the (pauses) my son's probably out, playing with his friends erm, and my daughter will have friends around. So I don't spend too much time playing with them in the week. I'd say it's not much on the weekends nowadays, they like their little bit of independence. They like to be out and about with their friends
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> *What sorts of things would you do with them in a typical day?*
> ... he's coming up to ten now so he just wants to be out with his friends. So he just wants friends around or taken to a friend's, or like, kind of play with their friends a lot now.
> Paul, Plant (9 and 8)

That these themes were present in the interviews with fathers of children who were not yet adolescent shows that there are some similarities between these fathers' accounts and those who did have adolescent children. Both groups of fathers talked about 'ferrying' their children to friends' homes and to clubs and other activities that their children may attend:

> *What sorts of things would you do with your children in an average day?*
> They're of that age now where they don't particularly want me to get involved in what they're doing (laughs) Especially my son who prefers the company of his own peers, and, but (pauses) It's difficult, I, I spend most of my time picking them up from friends' houses or ferrying them around.
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> *The things you were saying about your sons' sporting activities were interesting.*
> Yeah, I mean our youngest one is in the cricket club, and plays rugby with the school. But it doesn't erm, parents are still needed to be involved in those things. There's away games they go to, there's transport needed. So, it doesn't always mean that they're just catered for completely. If it's er, it does give the children something to do and other things to be involved in. But the parents need to be available to support that, and working parents aren't always. So it's er, erm, yeah, we try, well we've been available to do it. To take our share of it. But er, often you rely on other people's, other children's parents to do the, to do the runs to us, to other schools, to, for away games, away matches.
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

How do you feel that the kinds of things that you do with your daughters have varied with their ages?
When they're younger erm, I would be reading them stories, and you know, you're putting them to bed. Now, it's just you, tell her, you say, "Right, when you've finished your homework on the computer, time for bed! I'm going to bed!" (laughs). You know, things like that. For my youngest one, anyway. Like when she's finished on MSN, whatever it is, she's doing on the computer. You know, their lives these days are just so revolved around computers and school and, er, their social life. Their social life is so unbelievable compared to my social life when I was a child. I'd be outside playing and they're "take me to the cinema", you know? "Take me to this disco in Swansea". And I never went to a disco in Swansea until I was eighteen, nineteen, you know? (laughs) But now they're, well they're twelve going, because the police run these discos.

David, Plant, divorced lone father (18 and 14)

Although these fathers feel that they are spending less time with their children, it is apparent that by 'ferrying', they are facilitating children's growing independence. Fathers' role in developing children's independence has been documented in other research (Doucet, 2006). The fathers in this study saw this as an inevitable part of children growing up. The work of facilitating children's independence can be seen as corresponding with a wider, 'diffuse' approach to involvement in care, which is underpinned by an on-going responsibility and commitment to children (van Dongen, 1995). These fathers' comments reflect what has been termed the 'discourse of individuation' (Brannen et. al. 1994), as they emphasise the separation of their adolescent children from the home and family. Even though these fathers may appear to be taking a 'step back', they are contributing in other ways as care theorists have argued that autonomy is not achieved individually, and accords value to those who help in the relational process of fostering others' autonomy (Clement, 1996; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; and Tronto, 1993). Therefore, the fathers' nurturance of children's independence can be claimed as a form of care, although this is an area of caregiving that possesses masculine qualities (Doucet, 2006).

Fathers of adolescents identified these years as being crucial for children's future, particularly with regards to their education. This ties in with the tendency of fathers of teenagers describing

themselves as playing a role in supervising homework, in response to an interview question that asked them about the things that they would do with children on a 'typical' day. The emphasis that fathers placed upon this aspect of their relationships with children varied from the two lone fathers in the sample – both employed in the Plant – with the sole responsibility for ensuring children had completed their homework as part of their day-to-day care routines. Two managerial fathers described that they 'keep track' of children, as they felt that it was important they are up to date with their school work. This was achieved through conversations with children:

> [I] just discuss some bits of their homework with them, erm, what problems with it they may have. And erm, just, just making sure in general that they're on track and they're not taking off, losing focus of the school environment, basically.
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

> Obviously with the children going to secondary school now, both of them are in secondary school, my homework load has doubled (laughs)!
>
> Harry, Plant, manual, lone father (14 and 11)

One managerial father spoke of creating an environment at home during the evenings that he felt was conducive to helping children complete their homework. This is perhaps indicative of how this father's managerial sense of responsibility in accomplishing his organisational role influenced this fathers' homework engagement. In making his home work-like, he hopes that this can help with children's homework – this strategy parallels with the reversal of worlds between home and work that Hochschild (1997) identified:

> A good proportion of time with the children, still need now is erm, both (pauses) I wouldn't say help with homework, but help to focus on homework. But that still takes up quite a bit of to actually get them to knuckle down and do it. Not that we sit there and pore over them, but just creating that environment when erm, maybe I would occasionally bring some work home from the office, or, erm, I'd have other work to do for some of the other activities I'm involved in evenings and weekends. So I'll settle the kids, and say, 'look, I'm doing this paperwork now, I've got this reading to catch up on, now is your chance, put the telly off and let the, let's all sit

> down and, and er, focus on homework and er'. As teenagers that's something that they find hardest to do, is to settle their minds on er, on work that they've got to do.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

A few fathers identified attending parents' evenings as important in this regard:

> ... with three children it does seem that we spend quite a lot of time at school. By the time you sort of go for parents' evenings, and er, extras and after-hours activities, er sports. And er, you know, running them to and fro' different er, activities, that, that takes up a fair bit of er, a fair bit of time with them.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

> ... we'll attend the parents' evening for them to understand where they're at so we know what, you know. We just keep an eye on them, erm, not on top of them, but just ensuring they're on the right track, basically.
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

One father sat as a governor at one of his daughters' schools, stating that his participation would benefit his daughters indirectly. Exam times were particularly important for helping to secure the future success of children, and one father in a senior role in the Health Trust described how he had recently supported his daughter's GCSE revision:

> Day-to-day basis, erm, I'd still tend to help and they both do, one's done, just done her GCSEs, and one's done her SATs. I've, I will help, I've helped them, I still help them with homework. And I'll help them revise. And er, so, so that goes to them.. And er I think, I think just doing her GCSEs was a huge amount for the older one, and erm, I did, I made a conscious effort then to wish her good luck, go through the work with her beforehand, and things like that to simply support her. God, I'm so good to her! (laughs) No, I do try; I do try, try my best.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

Fathers' involvement in their children's education establishes a connection with children, but this care is less underpinned by friendship, although it does enter in terms of expressing their support for children. Fathers' educational role is more guided by disciplinary aspects of care and an advisory capacity. There are continuities with the dynamic of facilitating children's independence as fathers recognise the importance of children's educational outcomes. To find

that supporting children's homework activities figured heavily in (partnered) fathers' of teenagers accounts is not to imply that mothers do not undertake this form of engagement. This is particularly as others have found that helping with homework is a key part of parental duties during adolescence (Solomon et. al. 2002). Fathers may play an 'overseer' role with children's homework and education, where for example, they feel that it is important to attend parents' evenings, but fathers' capabilities to take an overarching role may be facilitated by partners' day to day care responsibilities. This is an issue for further exploration.

The Locations of Fathering

Fathering takes place in both public and private locations (c.f. Warin et. al. 1999; Clarke and O'Brien, 2004). With older children, fathers played an important role in ferrying children to their friends' homes, or to activities such as organised sports – football, cricket and rugby featured in this sample. This care facilitates adolescents' moves into public spaces as they seek to become more independent from parents. Although ferrying adolescents promotes their independence, father involvement in this area can work to maintain a good relationship with children. This father of two teenaged daughters describes the 'banter' that can occur between himself and his older daughter in the car:

> ... I've always got along with my daughters, you know. They tended to, I've also brought them up to be quite erm, opinionated and so on. I mean, last night for example, I happened to say something to one of them in the car and I absolutely, I got a diatribe back. And then she went storming off backstairs. I was actually giving her boyfriend a lift home, and she was in the back of the car. And I made a comment, she made a comment back. Basically, we had words. And she went storming upstairs. And Chris [partner] said to me, "she's the only person I know that can shut you up!" (laughs). So, in that respect, they're willing to fight now. They'll argue back. And it's all within sort of, acceptable banter, there's no arguments.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

This father feels that having 'acceptable banter' with his daughter contributes to her opinionated character. This overlaps with how fathers feel that a diffuse commitment to children enables them to influence them to develop similar values to those which they hold. Interactions of this nature would point to how this type of care, 'caring about', can occur in different settings, and is not the sole domain of the home (Palkowitz, 1997). Whilst ferrying, communication between fathers and children can happen (c.f. Warin et. al. 1999).

Some fathers of younger children that tended to not take or collect their children from school or childcare, particularly those employed in the Car Parts Plant who did not have formal flexitime, transported children to organised activities. These activities tended to take place at weekends, or lasted until the early evening when fathers had finished work. Three Plant fathers took their children to educational activities which included a first aid club, a maths club, and musical lessons, and one public sector father attended a support group for children on the autistic spectrum:

> *What sorts of things would you take your children to?*
> ... Erm, take them, like time out; last night he went to a club, we took him. He goes for help at the school down to [town], so we take him down there and we pick him up. And we take, she goes up to the library tonight and we'll go up to the library. And we'll go to Badger's Club which is like a first aid kind of club. It's just generally running them around all the time now, because they're in all these clubs, and you know, kind of moved on to the stage of like, doing things now.
>
> Paul, Plant (9 and 8)

Here, fathers' ferrying facilitates children's participation in formally organised activities. Fathers emphasised that children were receiving useful support by attending these activities. These fathers viewed themselves as taking children to external worlds in order to promote their learning and growth. This demonstrates how fathers can act as a link to public locations to help children learn to become competent at handling new social locations and relationships (Brannen

et. al. 2000). Transporting children to activities of this kind can be claimed as fathers contributing to paid work, childcare and education routines. Although these activities do not occur on the same daily basis as schooling and childcare, they were part of a weekly routine, which involved co-ordinating children's care and parents' paid work activities.

Fathers of children aged under ten emphasised playing with children as an important part of their relationships. Playing had a spatial nature. Whilst play did occur within the home in the form of activities such as playing computer games together, watching television, and playing board games, fathers placed a strong value upon playing outside with children. The value placed upon outside play can be seen in how this father feels that it is important to encourage his son to engage in physical outdoors play, when he was asked to describe the things that he would do with his young son:

> During the week, my wife's there three days. Erm, she'll do colouring, painting, cooking, things like that, you know, playing. Puzzles and things to get thinking, and writing, and drawing. When I come home then, I'll take him out in the garden, play in the garden. And then I'll take him on his bike and go down the park, you know. So when I come home, I want him to go out because when I grew up you was always outside, and you know, nowadays, it's not. You know, all the children are stuck indoors...
>
> Steve, Plant (20, 17 and 3)

Fathers' reasoning that outside play is beneficial for children can be interpreted as a means of responding to children's physical and developmental needs (Doucet, 2006). This can be seen here, in that this father would like to avoid his son being 'stuck indoors', which he sees as reflecting a wider cultural shift to home-based play.

However, it is important to maintain an awareness of how not all public spaces are necessarily socially and culturally open to fathers. Fathers' presence can have negative associations in

certain sites (Doucet, 2006). Only one instance was found across my sample where one father discussed how he can feel uncomfortable waiting whilst his daughter attended her dance class:

> I enjoy most of the things I do. Not particularly keen on going to dance, because it's very female-dominated and I sit there like a lemon. But I'm quite prepared to do it, even if I have to take a book and sit in the corner and read a book, but I'll do it.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

Although this is the sole example, it is still important to draw upon this point so as not to overstate the public nature of fathers' care. Whilst there is a very clear trend in the sample for fathers to be a link to the public sphere, there needs to be an understanding that they are engaging in care in spaces that have been claimed as culturally acceptable spaces for fathers to be present. In this example, the father will attend his daughter's dance class but his participation in the class is constrained by notions that it is not traditional for fathers to be there.

Fathers' Involvement in Care

Fathers With a Constant Level of Involvement: Shift Parenting and Lone Fathers

For the majority of fathers, their participation in childcare varied according to various circumstances that they were under, and also different times of the week and year. The two fathers in the sample who undertook 'shift parenting' with their partners tended to describe their participation as more constant, when they were asked about their role in everyday care and work routines, as they shared in a daily routine to facilitate partners' paid employment:

> ... it's either her doing everything or me doing everything. There's no sort of routine. I mean in our, in our days off together, we only really have one full day off together a week. Erm, the only other days off we have would be erm, the day, you know, if I was working a night shift then I'd be off during that day. So we'd be off 'til just after teatime together. But then we tend to share everything anyway.
>
> Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

> ... for instance, I finish at two o'clock. Now my wife starts [work] at two o'clock, so we sort of cross on the steps. And I tend to the baby then, and I pick my other children up from school. I do their tea, then my wife finishes at five thirty.
>
> Greg, Plant (17 months, 12 and 5)

However, a third father had a partner who worked term-time only, so their shift parenting only occurred during school term-times. In shift parenting, both parents are full participants in childcare so that use of outside childcare is minimised which provides more time and opportunities for fathers to engage in caregiving. Although all three fathers' partners worked part-time hours whilst they were employed full-time, shift parenting fathers had times during the week where they were solely providing care. For two fathers, their involvement was facilitated by their partners' atypical working hours. This provides further evidence of how some of the fathers with partners in paid employment constructed their work as enabling them to step in to provide care.

The two lone fathers and the father who had been a lone father but had since repartnered demonstrate how fathers can step in to become sole carers as a result of family circumstances. These fathers had a constant day-to-day involvement in the care of their children, what one father called 'doing it all' when he was asked about his everyday routines with managing work and childcare:

> [I] set their lunch boxes when they have to go to school. Make sure that they've got their uniform on, all ready and stuff like that. Their basic needs. Any money that they need for snacks. Erm, then when I come home then, put the dirty washing in a pile (laughs), sort that out. Er, make a quick snack because they've changed the dinner hours recently so that they've only got one lesson before they come home, so when they come home, they're not hungry. So it's just a quick snack, then we sit down, do their homework, and a cup of tea. Erm, and then sort of socialise a bit. Might have a game of scrabble, or things like that, just to keep the children's entertainment going, bit of fun for the evening.
>
> Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

There were times in the interviews where the two lone fathers asserted their fathering identities over their worker selves (O'Brien, 1982). Care came to the fore when one father explained how he understood the general situation for fathers today:

> ... you've got to remember that you're a father first, and a worker second. You know, you've got to provide a stable environment for a child, and they've got to have some sort of pattern.
>
> Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

However, the small sub-sample of lone fathers in this study cannot be characterised as one 'type'. The lone father who accorded care with a significant place in his sense of self would seem to correspond with Barker's (1994) group of 'pioneering' fathers. The other lone father, who cared for his fifteen-year-old daughter, would seem to have a place on the 'patriarchal' side of the fathering continuum (Barker, 1994) as he stressed her growing independence and the potential that this gave him in terms of time for his own leisure. His daughter enjoyed a close relationship with her older sister who lived independently, upon whom this father was able to draw upon to provide care. None of the lone fathers provided care for their children in isolation, in line with other's studies of lone fathers (Doucet, 2006), they are able to draw upon the support of female kin (c.f. Finch, 1989). The lone fathers reported receiving help from their mothers, girlfriend, and in another instance, their cousin. Although lone fathers' support networks of kin provide emotional support, it does not follow that they carry out routine childcare (Risman, 1986).

Temporal Variations in Fathers' Involvement

For the majority of the sample it emerged that father involvement is not a static concept: it was prone to 'temporal fluctuations' (Palkowitz, 1997). Fathers saw certain times as better to spend with children relative to children's daily routines. The rest of this section will focus upon the

temporal fluctuations in fathers' involvement. Firstly, the times during which fathers feel that they are able to have an involvement with children will be elaborated upon, followed by times or circumstances during which fathers felt they had withdrawn from care. This demonstrates the strengths of a qualitative approach where fathers are able to reflect upon the nature of their involvement in care at different times, as opposed to relying upon time diary or statistical snapshots where we know relatively little of the context in which the snapshots of fathers are taken. Fathers are more able to provide this information in their interview accounts. This offers possibilities to understand how they 'negotiate' caring (Finch and Mason, 1993) and how in working through their commitment to children, certain times were prioritised for involvement.

Weekdays were seen as a time of lesser involvement with children, when they responded to an interview question which asked them to talk about times where they felt that they did fewer things for their children. Fathers felt that their potential to spend time with children was limited by children – if school-aged – attending school and the nature of weekday routines. The vast majority of fathers' paid work occurred on weekdays. Most fathers recognised that by the time they were home from work they would only have a few hours to spend with children:

> ... during the week, if she's in school then we only usually see her between the hours of half five and half eight by the time she's in bed.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

> There is variation between the weekdays and the weekends. On the weekdays, I might only get to see them for a few hours. So on those days where I don't get up early in the mornings, I might only see them for about two and a half hours each day, then.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

However, the accounts given by the fathers of younger children emphasised the importance of time spent together during weekday evenings, playing and carrying out some caregiving tasks:

> ... the male is trying to do more with the child nowadays. I know when I go home, I want to spend as much [time] as I can, but you've still got to make sure, you know, they're going to bed at the same time, you know, to try and get enough sleep. So, your time with them is limited then. So, but, you've got to fit the time in somehow.
>
> Steve, Plant (20, 17 and 3)

Time spent with children in the evenings had an important role in making fathers feel that they were involved with younger children. It is notable that this father talks about wider cultural notions of fathering, in that he feels that fathers are 'trying' to have more involvement with children but then contrasts it with his fathering practices and its limitations in comparison with broader ideals surrounding fatherhood. A few fathers felt that the times of their employment, namely if they worked until the early evening, limited their availability to children:

> ... sometimes with the shifts, I can go two or three days without even seeing them. Erm, for example if I'm a late finish or I'm out to play squash as well, or sports, so if I've gone out for the evening and they've had football training after school, then they've gone to bed before I've come home.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

Fathers constructed weekdays as a structured time with routines to facilitate their full-time employment and this was primarily a work-focused part of the week which constrained fathers' potential to engage in or be available to care.

Overview of Fathers' Weekend Activities with Children

During weekends, fathers enjoyed a range of leisurely activities with children – many of these occurred outside of the home. In this section, a summary of the activities that fathers undertook with children is provided. The eight fathers of infants and preschool children's accounts pointed to the importance of play, family visits, and playing in the park. The twelve fathers of primary school-aged children undertook a broader range of activities with children. Going to the cinema

was popular with the local authority fathers. Six fathers enjoyed swimming with children. Sports were relatively common, particularly playing football with sons. These fathers and children visited other family members, they also ferried children to friends' homes and to organised activities – three of the Plant fathers took their children to educational activities. Ferrying children to activities or to friends' homes strongly featured in the accounts of fathers of secondary school-aged children. Sports activities were popular with fathers with sons, fathers watched their sons play football and rugby, in one case. Where fathers had daughters, ferrying them to friends' homes was a prominent activity.

Fathers' Accounts of Weekends

Fathers felt that weekends were an important time in terms of their presence and involvement with children, when they were asked in the interviews about times they felt that they did more things with their children. One father described how 'Saturday and Sunday for us [are spent] as family days'. In contrast to the work and school routines of weekdays, 'family days' during the weekends were seemingly set aside as a more relaxed time to spend with children[28]:

> ... on the weekend then, I think it's important to spend as much time as we can with him, really...
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

> ... the weekends we'll just spend a lot more time together, because obviously regarding work.
>
> Stuart, Plant (11 months)

> We do tend to try and reserve the weekends for relaxation. We try and er, shut all the, even if it means working perhaps in the evening times to get homework done, to get housework done, and shopping done. So if we can at all, erm, leave the weekends

[28] However, some caution is needed here as in the sample, one father, a senior staff nurse who worked full-time atypical hours and provided care whilst his partner, also a nurse who worked part-time atypical hours explained that, "because we work shifts, we, we don't really have the Saturday and Sunday, you know. It's all the same". This father felt that the one day himself and his partner spent together was an important family time, and he preferred this day to be scheduled during the week where places were quieter for visits and leisure activities. Although this is a tentative example, it may be that even where weekends are unavailable to spend time together as a family, it can occur during other times of the week.

> free, erm, we prefer to do that. You know, it doesn't always work out, but er. We've, neither of us have up 'til now worked weekends, so it's been easier to make that distinction because Saturday's always been a day off, Sunday's always been a day off. So it's not as if one of us has been in the office, or been at work, and turned Saturday into another working day.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

A few fathers felt that they had a more prominent role in caring, or what fathers termed a 'role reversal' with partners by acting as assistants to mothers whilst they are also present in the home:

> On weekends, a bit more. What I tend to do on weekends is take them out, take the kids out. Give my wife a bit of space, give her a bit of a break so that she can, she can do a few of the domestic chores. But it's also more because she's with them all, all through the week, erm, we try and do that.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> On the weekend, I suppose it's a bit different, it's a bit of a role reversal then. I'm always sort of up early on a weekend, where Rachel [his partner] might generally have a lie in, and so I'm sort of with the kids early in the morning. Throughout the day, I think it's, I've got to be honest, as of late, it's been a bit sort of difficult because as I say, because of the, you know, I've been working outside doing something in the garden. So from that point of view, Rachel has generally tended to take the kids off and do things. Erm, and generally now, but on a typical day, I mean if, if there was nothing to do then we would both be, you know, looking to do something with the kids. Erm, and it might be then, that you know, I might spend a bit more time doing things for the kids and doing things with the kids. Stuff I wouldn't have time to do during the week.
>
> Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

In these instances, fathers engaged in care to give partners a break from the routine of weekdays, although in the above instance the partner's 'break' may be spent carrying out domestic chores. Other fathers, particularly those of young children, stressed the role of leisure activities in the time that they spent with their children during weekends:

> ... on the weekends you know I'm more, er, I'll take them out for walks and er, we'll take the dog out, we'll take the football, have a kick around with the ball. Erm, and obviously then, we'll do things as a family as well, so.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> Weekends, if I'm not working. Erm, do the same again. You'll go down to like a, a play centre, and there's like ball pits, big slides, and so forth, you know, he'll play. But I'll take him, you know. Then he comes home. We'll do the same again, you know, and, you know, we try and spend as much time with him as we can. Again, take him on his bike, and he's got a car. You know, get him doing exercise and stuff.
>
> Steve, Plant (20, 17 and 3)

In response to being questioned about whether there were any times or circumstances where fathers felt that they were able to do more things with their children, the fathers felt that there were certain times occurring throughout the year where they felt it was important for them to have a presence with children. A few fathers described doing more things with children whilst on annual leave. This included annual leave taken for vacations, which were seen as a 'family time', as well as annual leave taken during other times of the year such as Christmas and Easter. Holidays away have been identified elsewhere as a significant time for father involvement (Warin et. al. 1999). One father was taking a half-day of annual leave to care for his daughter to which he was looking forward:

> ... if I've got a holiday, you know, tomorrow, I've got a half-day, so I'll pick the baby up from my parents, so then I'll look after her for the rest, you know, rest of the afternoon, at least until my wife comes home. So, tomorrow I'll probably have an extra four hours with my daughter. Of just myself and her.
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

> I suppose that would be on birthdays, Christmas and other special occasions. And it does depend what mood I'm in. I can get very tired due to the lack of sleep. If it's been a bad night, then it doesn't put you in a good mood, and then it can get very demanding in the morning. So a good night's sleep does help.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

Some fathers, particularly as children grew older, felt that holidays were a special time where they would have unrestricted access to their children, so that they were able to spend time together:

> Holiday times we tend to erm, spend a lot more time playing games together, erm which we don't do at home. When we're at home, we all sort of go to our own little spaces – whether it's on the computer, or in the bedroom, or in the living room. But when we're away, we all tend to enjoy games, you know, sort of erm, spending time together just playing cards or board games, or things like that. We do a lot more of that sort of erm, especially perhaps over the Christmas holidays and summer holidays.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

> He just wants friends around or taken to a friend's or like kind of play with their friends now, a lot now. When we go away on holidays, I suppose I say that's the most, the most things we actually do with them, with the kids when you [go on holiday]. I mean, I go to football with him. I take him to football every Saturday; I take him for football training with him on a Wednesday, so I take him football training on a Wednesday. Er, when we go away on holidays, we go swimming or go for walks – that type of thing. Because we go away lots, lots of weekends if we know we're going away, we go for walks, bike rides, that type of thing, yeah. Play board games if it's raining and we're stuck in the caravan to pass the time.
>
> Paul, Plant (9 and 8)

In this instance the potential that holidays offer to spend time with his son is constructed by means of a comparison with the nature of his day-to-day involvement at home. There are overlaps with his son's growing sense of independence; he spends time with his friends and this father ferries him to football training. The kinds of involvement that this father describes whilst they holiday would appear to be activity-led, occurring outdoors, and guided by feelings of friendship and companionship.

When fathers were asked whether there were any times where they might provide less childcare than usual, the fathers were able to describe some instances where this had occurred. Their reasons centred on two categories, firstly, the demands of work, and secondly, their feelings. Work demands were cited the most, as some fathers worked away at times. The group of fathers that affected by this were two of the fathers that worked for the car parts plant as they worked overseas for a few weeks, several times each year, supporting production in other plants that were owned by the same multinational corporation. The fathers that worked for the

Communications Provider cited the demands of work as constraining their involvement with children:

> ... work-related things, you know, when I'm really busy in work. I mean er, there was a period when we were really busy and I was very stressed and very tired, and er, you know, my wife er, recognised that and tried to do as much as she could to help.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> ... less things perhaps if you're home late from work, or you're too tired, or sometimes you're just so tired, I'm afraid you say you can't be bothered sometimes. It's not very nice to say but erm, you're just too tired to do it. And the kids are the same as well sometimes. You know, you're ready to go home and take them out to the pictures or something, and they've got homework so they just spend time doing it themselves. So I think its general day-to-day things.
>
> Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

> ... my time at home is sometimes less with working commitments, you know? There are some extreme cases sometimes because the nature of the work and the business is in Europe now. But you can spend perhaps a third of your year away, yeah, yeah, so it can have its moments as well.
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

These times not only relate to coping with work demands, but they also relate to fathers' own feelings. The fathers in managerial careers attributed these instances to work demands crossing into the home. In relation to fathers' own feelings, when fathers felt stressed and tired, they perceived that they have less involvement with children:

> ... not consciously. Er, but I'm sure there have been times. Probably coinciding with work, coinciding with illness or bereavement in the family, when life just gets on top of you, and sometimes you just don't get all the things done that, you know, you'd like to do. It's erm, I suppose we've always found it comes and goes in cycles, and as long as you're aware that er, you know, sometimes things have been let slip, you get back on top of it when you're capable of it, and when, you know, you're able to.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

This father felt that his withdrawal from care was temporary or as he saw it 'cyclical', with times where he had more involvement seemingly counteracting his times of lesser involvement. In

terms of the ethics of care, Sevenhuijsen (2002) has drawn our attention to the need for those who engage in care to negotiate caring for others with care for the self, and that those who provide care at times, will need to have time for themselves. This resonates with these fathers' accounts, although in the above instances their paid work commitments, or financial provisioning for their families (which can be understood to be a form of care) can lead to tiredness which constrains their involvement in care. These instances in the data where fathers' care is understood to be fluctuating, or characterised by a cyclical nature, would seem to lend some support to fathers holding a 'diffuse' sense of responsibility towards children. However, these findings would seem to dispute arguments that fathers do not problematise a more distant approach to care. It is important to understand fathering practices in fathers' own terms, but it should not be accompanied by too narrow an interpretation. Wider contextual factors cannot be dispensed with in how we analyse fathering practices, particularly as fathers' experiences of work and care can be problematic, and not straightforward at times, as these accounts would suggest, with fathers experiencing stresses, related to the context of their paid employment, that they identify as constraining their involvement with children.

Summary

The chapter opened with an overview of the questions that were asked to fathers in the childcare part of the interviews, so that it can be seen how the fathers' responses were shaped by the kinds of questions that they were asked. These were open-ended interview questions which succeeded in eliciting men's accounts of their fathering practices. A strength of this approach was that it provided rich data on fathers' engagement with care. However, there are disadvantages in that a more structured approach to questioning may have provided a more thorough picture of the care that fathers provide. It must also be remembered that fathers' partners were not interviewed and so their accounts cannot be cross-checked in this way. Although sampling the fathers from four

employers has succeeded in situating them in their organisational contexts, there are limitations to how well they are placed in their household and family contexts, which are also an important part of the structure-agency dynamic in this study.

The fathers of children aged under five undertook care during the evenings such as putting children to bed and bathing, which fits in with their working hours. A few fathers also reported attending to children during the night, but this was not widespread. Although these fathers carried out routine care it did not follow that they felt that their relationships with children were fully developed, as they anticipated that that their confidence would grow as children became older. These fathers felt that they were constrained by what they understood to be their partners' innate abilities to care for infants.

In terms of the fathers' of primary-school aged children accounts, where fathers were involved in day-to-day care such as getting children ready for school, and taking and collecting them, this care involves daily negotiations with reference to social and institutional times of paid employment, schools, and childcare providers. In terms of structure and agency, these fathers provided such care when their partners were unable to because of paid work commitments, particularly amongst the fathers in the public sector who had access to flexitime. Playing with children was a popular task with all of these fathers, and it was related to men's enjoyment of fathering. Furthermore, in terms of care, fathers felt that playing with children created a strong bond with them.

Fathers of older children felt that their involvement had changed, as they were no longer playing with children and providing routine caregiving to children. Instead, fathers felt that they had the agency to respond to needs that children initiated. In this light, fathers' care changes in response

to children's development. Here, fathers are enabled to contribute to children's growing independence by ferrying them to friends' homes or to organised activities. This corresponds with a diffuse approach to care, which emphasises adolescents' separation. In terms of the ethics of care, fathers feel that they engage with relational aspects of care that help to foster children's independence. However, these aspects of care carry masculine connotations. Fathers do not just stress adolescents' independence; they seek to maintain feelings of connectedness through developing children's personal values. Men also negotiated fathering with reference to traditions of fatherhood, although this is downplayed in their accounts. Only two fathers talked about how their ability to negotiate with their partners over care was constrained by the stocks of knowledge that they had learnt whilst working professionally with children. It was also found that there were constraints, relating to gender, to the care that fathers felt that they were able to provide with a view to promoting independence, as demonstrated by the fathers of teenaged girls. Fathers reported an involvement in children's homework, this ranged from the two lone fathers with the overall responsibility for supervising children; others talked with children with an interest to find out about their schoolwork. This care was less about friendship, as it was underpinned more by promoting teenagers' independence, but through taking more of a disciplinary, overseer role, which relates to more traditional notions of fathering.

Fathering occurs in both private and public locations. For example, fathers' supported children's movement into public spaces as they became more independent, but in terms of care ferrying children also furthers relationships with children. The Plant fathers who did not have access to day-to-day flexibility over their working hours which constrained their involvement in children's morning routines, were able to transport children to organised activities during early evening times and weekends, and these trips were often of an educational nature. It was seen that fathers' play with children took place both in and outside the home, and that fathers of young children

felt that playing outside benefited children's physical and developmental needs. However, not all public spaces may be open to fathers – there was one instance in the data of a father feeling hesitant to wait whilst his daughter attended her dance class, which shows that there are some constraints on the types of care that fathers can provide in public spaces.

There was a small group of fathers of younger children in the sample who shift-parented as part of a routine. In these instances, partners' absences through paid work provided fathers with more opportunities to provide sole care. Two lone fathers had overall responsibility for children's care, but their engagement varied according to the age of children, although they were both able to draw upon help from female kin. The majority of fathers though, did not have a static involvement in care. The evenings were an important time for fathers to play and to undertake caregiving tasks. In contrast to weekdays, the weekends emerged as 'family days' which provided a more relaxed time for fathers to spend with children. Fathers also felt that their annual leave taking for holidays away provided them with a continual access to children. This demonstrates that fathers negotiate fathering and their availability to care for children under the constraints of their times of paid employment. The findings concerning fathers' accounts of their engagement with childcare have been presented in this chapter; we now turn to finding out about the nature of fathers' participation in domestic labour.

8.
Fathers' Negotiations of Domestic Labour

Introduction

In previous chapters, the four organisational cultures that the fathers in the study are situated in have been shown to have some influence over their ability to have some flexibility over their working hours. The fathers' accounts of their engagement in care were found to be affected by the age of their children. Curiously, fathers' access to flexibility, whether through being in a relatively senior organisational role or through more formalised flexitime systems, was found to have a positive impact upon fathers' reported involvement in care. In particular, it fostered their involvement in younger, school-aged children's daily weekday care, such as taking them to school or to childcare in the mornings. This chapter presents the findings from the third research question concerning how fathers' negotiate their participation in domestic tasks. This includes the household tasks that fathers report performing. This research question also addresses fathers' views of the chores that their partners' undertake, so that we gain an understanding of the fathers' opinions on their roles in domestic labour in relation to their partners.

The chapter opens with an overview of the interview questions that fathers were asked about their engagement in domestic labour. The use of these open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews is reflected upon. A consideration is given to the use of alternative research methods and how these might have given a different picture of the fathers' participation. For the partnered fathers, the dynamics surrounding the negotiation of their involvement in domestic tasks that they presented in their interview accounts related to their reported household task allocations, and so this is drawn out in this chapter. Although these interpersonal elements are important, so too are their partners' working hours, as well as the times of their employment. An overview of the tasks that the fathers' reported themselves as undertaking is provided. It will

be seen that there is a diverse range of task allocation in the sample, with different dynamics and meanings held between partners, but there were commonalities, which facilitated the groupings developed. These five groupings are: 'traditional' fathers, fathers who leave domestic labour to their partners, piecemeal participators, '(relative) sharers', and the lone fathers. The chapter will now commence with an overview of the questions that fathers were asked about their negotiation of domestic labour in their interviews, and some thoughts on the use of these questions, particularly how these shaped their responses.

The Interviews and Some Reflections on Research Methods

The domestic labour section of the interviews opened with a broad, open-ended question that asked fathers to talk about the general things around the house that they do. The term 'general things around the house' was used as it was hoped that this would encourage men to also talk about tasks that they may have overlooked if the narrower term 'housework' was used. It was felt that 'things around the home' would be understood by fathers as also including housework tasks, but it is a more neutral way of asking this question. For example, if fathers with a relatively low participation in domestic tasks were asked this question, they may have felt the need to exaggerate their participation, since it could be viewed as containing an underlying assumption that men did such tasks. However, there were further prompts which mentioned certain tasks, including maintenance and gardening, and these were particularly useful in instances where men reported undertaking relatively few domestic tasks. To help understand whether fathers performed their tasks as part of a household routine, or on a more irregular basis, they were then asked about how often they would do such jobs. Fathers were then asked to think about the rough amount of time that they spent doing these jobs over a week or a day, whichever was easiest for them to think about their answer. The figures given for these answers were not taken as an 'objective' measure of fathers' time spent on domestic labour, but their responses to

this question were interesting in the way that they talked about the length of time that they did tasks. This also helped to gauge whether or not fathers undertook their tasks regularly as part of a routine or occasionally. The fathers were also asked questions about whether their performance of domestic tasks ever varied, with times or circumstances where they undertook more chores and less chores than usual.

Once fathers had reflected upon the tasks that they usually performed, how often they did them, and how long they spent on them, they were asked to talk about how they felt about these chores. This was followed by a question which prompted fathers to consider whether anything helps them to undertake household tasks, and another question on what they felt did not help them. They were then asked whether there was something that could enable them to do more jobs. This question was on a more hypothetical level than the previous two questions, where I wanted to explore the context in which fathers undertook chores, and how this enabled and constrained their participation.

Further questions explored fathers' perceptions of their partners' participation in housework. Firstly, they were asked to talk about the jobs that they understood their partners as undertaking. This was followed by a question which asked fathers to consider how much time they thought that their partners spent on domestic chores. As with the fathers' answers to the question which asked them to reflect on how much time they spent on chores, the answers were useful in that fathers spoke about the times during which they understood their partners as spending on housework. The depth of information, or lack of it in some cases, that fathers were able to provide in response was very illuminating in terms of the 'ownership' of domestic tasks. Asking fathers to talk about how they felt about the time that their partners' spent on housework helped to tap into their understandings of 'fairness' in who undertakes domestic tasks. A further

question on whether fathers' felt that their partners should do more or less of the chores also explored ideas of fairness and what constitutes their ideals of equity in the domestic sphere. Fathers were then asked to talk about what they perceived to be their partners' opinions on the jobs that they did around the home. This explored whether fathers felt their partners were pleased with the chores that they undertook, as well as other issues such as domestic standards and knowledge of when jobs needed doing. It should be noted that fathers were not asked in their interviews about whether they hired cleaners to help with domestic tasks, but no fathers reported their use in their accounts.

This overview has highlighted how the interviews explored fathers' household tasks with a series of open-ended interview questions. Many of the reflections that were made in the previous chapter on the use of open-ended questions to elicit responses from fathers on their childcare would also apply here. For example, open-ended questions rely upon fathers' memory and some tasks may be remembered more vividly whilst others are overlooked and not included in the resulting data; they are omissions in the interview accounts that the researcher will not know about. However, the use of open-ended questions in this section also led to some reflective accounts from fathers, so that the use of this methodology fulfilled this aim of the study.

In terms of the use of other methods, I could have utilised lists of housework tasks with which to ask fathers whether or not they undertook them. They could have been used as a visual prompting method in the interview, or have been included in the interviews as spoken prompts which followed on from the opening question. As I argued in the previous chapter, this method would have given a more thorough picture of their participation, and possibly one quite different from what I gained from my open-ended questions. However, I feel that a particular danger with this more thorough method is that it would have encouraged fathers to exaggerate the tasks that

they performed, as asking them about specific tasks may have led to a perception that it was somehow 'expected' of them to do these tasks. If fathers were asked to describe their participation, then this would seem to minimise these expectations creeping into the interviews.

As a young female, interviewing fathers about childcare and domestic labour, I feel that there may have been a perception that I have certain expectations of what men should do. At times when fathers were talking about their partners' care or domestic labour they would feel it necessary to qualify what they were saying by stating that they 'weren't being sexist' or that they had 'traditional' views. This may be because as Jamieson (2005:193) argued, '... it is no longer acceptable to acknowledge that women do the cooking and cleaning because they are women'. During the domestic labour section of the interviews, when fathers were talking about their contribution or what their partners did, they would often laugh. I am unsure as to what this laughter means, it may be indicative of the invisible, taken-for-granted nature of housework; it may be seen as a strange topic for research. Fathers tended to laugh when they were talking about their avoidance of disliked tasks or when discussing partners' specific ways of performing tasks. Possibly they may have sought to diffuse an awkward situation where they felt I might have judged them negatively.

It would have helped to unpack these sections of the interviews by also interviewing the fathers' partners, as given these gendered dynamics, they may have exaggerated their participation in domestic chores. This would have provided further data which would have helped to contextualise the defensiveness of some of the fathers at these points in the interviews, so that it could have been more clearly demonstrated whether their responses were used by fathers as excuses or whether they were accounts of domestic strategies that couples had developed over time. Since I did not interview partners, this can only be gleaned from the fathers and there are

limitations with this approach. As I also reflected with regards to interviewing partners in the childcare chapter, interviewing them in addition to fathers would have helped to situate the fathers' accounts in their household relationships, and the ways in which they negotiate with fathers. However, the interviews with the fathers provided rich accounts of how they felt that they negotiated domestic labour, but it must be remembered that these accounts carry limitations and that they are a product of the interview dynamics in which they were gathered.

Fathers' Accounts of their Negotiation of Domestic Labour

Overview of Fathers' Reported Domestic Tasks

This section provides a brief overview of the tasks that fathers reported undertaking in their interviews. They are presented first by the fathers' employers and then by their partners' working hours to see whether they have any bearing on the fathers' accounts of their participation in domestic tasks. The most popular tasks that fathers spoke about were washing up and gardening. All of the Communications Company fathers reported undertaking gardening, as did all of the five Health Trust fathers. Washing up was another popular task, but this was spread fairly evenly amongst the fathers in the sample. Cleaning was frequently reported by fathers, particularly those that worked in the two public sector organisations, but less so amongst the Communications Company fathers. However, four out of the five Communications fathers reported undertaking clothes washing; overall this task was reported by half of the sample. Thirteen fathers mentioned maintenance tasks, although it was notable that this was less popular with both the Local Authority and Communications fathers. Ten fathers reported cooking in their interviews, but this was not patterned by their employers. Slightly fewer fathers recalled preparing breakfast – none of the Local Authority fathers did so in their interviews. Nine fathers reported food shopping, and this was evenly spread across the sample. Nine fathers talked about hoovering, which includes four men from the Car Parts Plant. Eight fathers reported undertaking ironing, this was particularly popular amongst the Communications Company fathers.

Looking at the fathers' reported performance of domestic labour by their partners' employment shows that washing up was a strong feature of the accounts given by fathers with partners who worked part-time and reduced hours. Six of the seven fathers whose partners worked reduced hours recalled that they gardened. It was notable that cleaning was raised more in the interviews with the fathers whose partners worked reduced hours, as was cooking. The washing of clothes figured more in the accounts given by fathers whose partners worked part-time and reduced hours. Carrying out household maintenance tasks was more of a feature with the interviews of the fathers with partners in part-time paid employment. Ironing was present in the accounts given by some of the fathers with partners working reduced hours and two fathers whose partners worked full-time. The accounts of fathers whose partners worked part-time hours' were notable for their reports of hoovering, although there were also fathers with partners working full-time and reduced hours who hoovered. Fathers' reports of shopping were not patterned by their partners' hours of employment.

Fathers' Accounts of their Reported Domestic Tasks

Gardening was a popular task in the fathers' interview accounts, when they were asked about what chores they typically undertake. In some cases, the fathers saw gardening as more of a hobby that provided relaxation rather than a domestic chore:

> ... gardening gets you out there in the fresh air and it relaxes you. And er, you know, you can switch off [from] everyday duties away from your home life to your working life, you know. But I think I find that quite good.
>
> Bill, Plant, manager (17 and 15)

> I mean, there's other things that we haven't mentioned, like I cut the grass and stuff and do all that sort of thing, you know. But then they're not regular.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

> The gardening I do quite a bit, and including that it would be three hours. But with the gardening it depends whether it's the summer or the winter, but perhaps it would add another hour on top of what I do.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

A few of these fathers pointed out that they viewed gardening as more of a seasonal task, which would require more time from them during the summer months. In this way, gardening may not be comparable with other domestic tasks that are ongoing throughout the year which require a continuous and sustained effort.

Washing up and drying dishes, or loading and unloading dishwashers were tasks that a sizeable proportion of the sample reported their participation in. These were often the first domestic tasks that fathers would list in the interviews when they were asked what sorts of things they would do around the home. Thirteen fathers said that they do the washing up, or help their partners with this task:

> I would do some washing up and drying up.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

> I do help her with the washing up.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

A further three fathers mentioned that they loaded or unloaded their dishwashers regularly:

> I'll you know, pitch in and put stuff in the dishwasher, you know, helping out as best I can.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

It is interesting to note that all of the fathers that used dishwashers in the sample were in shift parenting households where they would be responsible for housework and childcare whilst their partners were in paid employment.

Over half of the sample reported that they undertook cleaning around the home. For some of these fathers though, they would qualify their statement that they did 'a bit' of it:

> I do a bit of cleaning. But I'm afraid it's very much along the, er, gender, the traditional gender lines.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

> ... perhaps a bit of cleaning and all that, you know.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

So whilst these fathers report doing some cleaning, for most, it did not necessarily mean that they undertook a substantial amount of this work. The fathers that described themselves as undertaking more cleaning were those that spoke more generally in their interviews of making concerted efforts to have a more equitable division of labour with their partners. One of these fathers was involved in a shift parenting arrangement where he held the responsibility for childcare and household chores whilst his wife was at work:

> Being a full-time Dad, I do everything: I have to do the cooking, the cleaning...
>
> Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

Maintenance tasks were popular amongst the sample. Some of these would appear to be more routine jobs:

> ... if you look at weekends, the last couple of weekends if you like, I've been doing maintenance up the garden. This weekend for instance I was doing something within the house on the Saturday...
>
> Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

What do you think are your partner's views about the jobs that she does?
Generally I think she likes to do them [household chores], apart from changing light bulbs, so that's my task. My wife's not skilled in that area, I always say she's 'technically challenged'; she just hasn't got a clue about mechanical things! (laughs)
Joe, Plant (6)

This is the only instance across the study in which a father openly related that he felt that his partner was unable to undertake certain household tasks, which was attributed to the way in which he perceived her capabilities and skills in gendered terms.

Although half of the fathers in the sample reported washing clothes, there were differences in how often they described performing this particular task. Two lone fathers described clothes washing as being one part of their daily domestic routine:

Sometimes now, I put the washing in when I come home in to work. I go home for lunch and I'll hang it out... I've had to work around it now.
Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

Another father who washed clothes regularly was a shift parent, whilst another held sole responsibility for this task:

I mean it doesn't take long to load up the washing machine you know, and unloading, really... I do do the dishwashing and the, the clothes washing and things when the kids are in bed because I like, get more time. Erm, so everything tends to wait until after seven in the evening.
Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

... you know, not very often, but she'll occasionally may go away for a weekend with friends or something, erm and that type of thing. Yeah, I mean, you know, I'm quite confident and happy to do everything. You know, I think I can do everything. I can put a washing machine on, I can you know.
Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

I'll put some washing in the machine, and hang out the washing... Well she complains about my washing up and says that I don't hang the washing out right!
Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

Two fathers described how they felt that they needed direction from their partners before they put washing into the machine:

> *What do you think about that?* [The amount of time that his partner spends on domestic chores]
> I think we try and share things, you know, equitably, really, you know, the best I can, you know. Given that I don't do any washing of clothes, it's alright (laughs) yeah.
> Colin, Plant (9)

The father above, Colin, who describes how he shares household work with his partner, does not extend his sharing to the washing of clothes. It can also be seen that he uses laughter when he talks about his reticence to undertake this task.

A substantial proportion of fathers talked about cooking in their interviews. The two lone fathers talked at length about the cooking that they undertook, and how they saw it as part of their daily household routine. Two partnered fathers of infants both described preparing evening meals on a daily basis. Another father of a primary school aged daughter recounted how he either prepares their evening meals or provides care; a father of one preschool and one primary school aged child followed a similar pattern:

> Erm, cooking, pretty much fifty-fifty. Erm, you know, just sorting out the kitchen after cooking would be pretty much fifty-fifty.
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

> I cook every meal, always... I also cook the Sunday lunch, so I cook for the family at home.
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

The fathers that had a greater share in the cooking, once again, were those who were shift parents, and one father whose wife came in later than him from work everyday. One father 'chose' to cook his meals everyday, as he disliked the food that his partner prepared:

What sorts of tasks do you do during a normal day or week?
... Erm, cooking. I cook for myself and I occasionally cook for the little one, but we don't cook for each other because I have my food, she likes her food. And I think my food's better, and she thinks her food is better!

Mark, HealthTrust, accountant, adoptive father (6)

In other instances in the sample, cooking emerged as a task that the rest of the fathers felt that their partners were responsible for, when they were asked about the tasks that partners undertook. Although some fathers reported that they prepared breakfasts or children's lunchboxes for school, it appeared that physically cooking a meal was seen to be the work of their partners:

... I think she does a lot more of the cooking than I do for the children. Definitely does a lot more of the cooking. I'm not there for a start. Erm, I'll make them their breakfasts and then they have lunch at school, but teatime my wife will be cooking.

Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

... she'll do the cooking, most of the cooking because I suppose, you know, that's again the time that she's home and I'm not.

Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

It is notable that some of these fathers' explanations of their partners' responsibilities for cooking were underpinned by their presence in the home at the times when meals needed to be cooked.

A similar proportion of fathers who reported cooking described undertaking food shopping. There were differences between the ways in which fathers presented their participation in this task. One father held the responsibility for sorting out his household's shopping which he ordered over the Internet. Two fathers described that they shared shopping with their partners, through undertaking shopping trips by themselves:

The nursery they go to, how does that work out? What are the benefits of that?
Well, now the oldest one is going er, she's starting full-time in September... So at least we get mornings off, erm, which allows you to go around the supermarket without being pestered all the way around for sweets and things...

Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

Others reported that they sometimes accompanied their partners shopping, but they felt that they did not hold a responsibility for establishing which items needed to be bought:

If we talk about the jobs that your wife does around the house, what sorts of things does she do?
My wife just makes things run smoothly. For example, when we go shopping, my wife makes a list beforehand of what's needed... Oh, I've also remembered some more jobs that I do... There's the shopping which is about two hours a week, if not more, as the travelling there and back adds more time to it. I mean household, food shopping here, not shopping for pleasure. We often do this together as I'm not trusted to do it alone!

Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

Similarly, another father felt that his wife maintained the responsibility for food provisioning, but he sometimes helped by shopping for specific items:

Erm, my wife retains the day-to-day shopping... she's always in control of what she's got in the cupboards and in the fridge, and erm, she does the cooking so she knows what she needs. And you know, I don't usually come home with food and say, "this is what we're going to have tonight, dear!" you know. It would be more likely be she'll ring me and say, "can you bring so and so in"...

Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

Hoovering was a relatively popular task amongst the fathers, when they were asked about the jobs that they did around their homes, however for many of these men, it emerged that their participation in this task was on a non-committal basis:

Sometimes she hasn't got the time to do it, so I'll stick the hoover on.

Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> Erm, if I've got time, I'll put the hoover across...
>
> Greg, Plant (17 months, 12 and 3)

For these fathers, vacuuming was seemingly an optional task which they may undertake if their partners either do not have the time to do it, or if the fathers themselves have the time, and decide to do it. Of the fathers who presented themselves in their interviews as doing the vacuuming on a regular basis, one man was a shift parent and the other two men described themselves as hoovering whilst their partners undertook household tasks that they themselves did not want to do.

Ironing was a task that eight fathers reported performing in their interviews. One described himself as undertaking some ironing on an occasional basis, whilst another lone father ironed, but acknowledged that his mother does the majority of this task. Four fathers reported ironing regularly, whereby they were either responsible for ironing their clothes, or ironing for others in their households:

> Erm, ironing that's me, the Mrs. don't iron.
>
> Mark, HealthTrust, accountant, adoptive father (6)

> *How do you feel about the amount of jobs around the house that you do?*
> ... I was brought up in a house with two sisters and basically there was no room to be shy about housework. If you were able and if you spotted a job, and it was the same when I grew up. So there would be regular periods where, you know, a duster would be thrust into your hand and just pointed at the relevant room. And I've been ironing for the whole family since I was about fourteen, so these sorts of things aren't new to me, as an individual. In terms of the fatherhood, there are smaller things to iron.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

This stepfather feels that he has learnt his proactive approach to housework during his upbringing. He has been socialised to contribute to running his family's household in that he dusted and took on the responsibility to iron for his family. This was the only instance in the

study of a father discussing their learning of domestic tasks in such a way. Two fathers ironed less regularly, undertaking this task when they felt that their partners needed the assistance:

> ... when she is working I tend to pitch in do a bit of ironing... Erm, in the evenings er, I'll be fully engaged in er, you know I'll, I might iron a shirt or something for the next day, if my wife hasn't done it. Erm, I may even iron some of the kids' clothes if she wants me to. I mean, I've got no problem with that.
>
> Richard, Communications, manager (11 and 2)

DIY tasks were less popular than general household maintenance tasks amongst the sample. It could be that competence is an issue for some fathers:

> ... I try and do a little bit of 'do-it-yourself', but I'm not very good at it! (laughs)
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> Oh yes, a little bit of DIY – you know, that what I can do.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

> ... I might put up a picture or rewire a plug or something like that. And that sort of thing tends to be more my job really than my wife doing them.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

This may partly explain why more fathers felt more prepared to identify and 'own' maintenance tasks in their accounts. However, even though these fathers described themselves as not being particularly good at performing these tasks, they still presented themselves as holding responsibility in this area, as opposed to their partners. Two fathers felt that they were particularly competent at DIY and took on substantial projects in their homes:

> *What sorts of jobs would you do around the house?*
> I do everything.
> *Everything.*

> In my previous house I did everything: I put central heating in, laid the floors, did all the maintenance, garden, conservatory. You know, I like DIY so that's no problem for me.
>
> David, Plant, divorced lone father (18 and 14)

Undertaking these tasks clearly requires an ongoing time commitment from these men during their own leisure time. However, DIY may be seen as something that is undertaken as a 'hobby'. This was the case for the father above who mentioned that he 'liked' DIY.

A small group of fathers mentioned that they reserved the heavier domestic chores for themselves to do, in response to a question which explored their daily participation in domestic labour. The tasks that fathers categorised as being the heavier work cut across different specific chores. For two fathers in the study, 'heavier work' was associated with some areas of gardening that they preferred to perform:

> ... the heavy job involving the large petrol mower and tools is my job, because that's a pain, obviously.
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

> *Things like gardening?*
> I don't particularly enjoy gardening, but if there's the sort of heavier work to be done then I will do it. But she does the planting and flowers, and stuff.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

It appears that for some fathers, performing heavier work is seen as a gendered task that they are prepared to undertake, and even see it as their responsibility to do so. One father felt that he preferred to undertake the heavier work in the home as he reasoned that it was safer that way:

> *Have there been any times, or circumstances you've been under, when you've been able to do more of the housework, or perhaps less of it?*
> I can do more when there's nobody there. So if my wife and Marie are out shopping, or visiting, or something else, I can get an awful lot done. The nature of the work is different as well. If there are heavier tasks to do or anything that involves DIY then I tend to prefer to do that if the girls aren't there, just in case. Well, the precise reason

> is, I was once knocked off a ladder while distracted by Marie [stepdaughter] while I was drilling so (laughs). Everything was fine, its just a case of I was so concerned about whether she would get close to the materials or tools. Just for a second my attention was taken away and I stepped and balanced wrongly and fell off... So I prefer to do that kind of thing when they're not around the house.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

Three fathers reported that were responsible for preparing their children's breakfasts during the weekdays, in response to a question on the tasks they undertake. It was notable that these fathers had partners who often started work earlier in the morning than them. For example, one father had a partner whose job necessitated a relatively long commute, so as his partner left for work, he reported preparing breakfast for their primary school aged son:

> I'm just there with him in the morning, giving him his breakfast.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

> ... I'll make them their breakfasts and then they have lunch at school. But teatime my wife will be cooking.
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> I mean, my first thing is breakfast for them everyday.
>
> Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

The two lone fathers in the study also described how they were responsible for packing their children's lunchboxes and preparing snacks for their children when they came home from school.

Fathers' Opinions on Domestic Labour

When asking the fathers in their interviews how they felt about the tasks around the house that they undertook, the most common and initial response to this question was that they 'did not mind' doing them. However, there were differences in their emphasis in the ways in which they 'did not mind' doing their tasks. For one father, 'not minding' was a part of his commitment to being a 'new age' father:

> I don't mind, you know. I think I'm a bit of a new age Dad, maybe, you know. I really don't mind doing it.
>
> Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

It is intriguing how this father links his feelings about his domestic labour with how he sees his fathering identity – this may be related to how, at times, he is solely responsible for both caring for his children and undertaking household tasks. For other fathers, 'not minding' doing domestic tasks was underpinned by their wanting to ease the burden on their partners:

> I try to help out as much as I can because as I say, I work, we work about the same hours, but because my wife, my wife has to travel, you know, she's got like erm, about thirty to forty minutes travelling each way, so you know, perhaps longer really, so I don't mind getting the food on...
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

For this father, his participation in domestic labour is facilitated by his partner's working hours, and that they both work full-time, with his partner travelling a greater distance to work than him everyday. These factors seem to give him a greater compulsion to undertake household chores. Similar reasons were also given by other fathers who had a relatively high involvement in domestic labour when they were explaining their reasons for sharing domestic labour in their households.

However, more negative sentiments were expressed by some of the other fathers about household tasks. The most extreme case was this father who described himself as feeling 'happy', since he rarely undertook any household chores:

How do you feel about the amount of jobs around the house that you do at the moment?
Well, I'm pretty happy about it because I don't do much! (laughs) I'm sure she thinks quite differently. But at the moment it's working out for the two of us.
Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

However, it was not just the fathers who had little involvement in housework that viewed it with negativity, but also some of the fathers who reported that they undertook more chores. One father who worked in the Car Parts Plant and had a shift parenting arrangement to cover his partner's part-time working hours described how he just had to seemingly "grin and bear it". Intriguingly, this father initially said, when asked how he felt about undertaking domestic tasks, that he did not mind having a share of the tasks, and how he saw it as being "part of a partnership". He was keen to pay 'lip service' to the idea of sharing out domestic labour, but in practice he clearly feels more negative about it. This shows the complexity and possible ambivalence that some of the fathers felt about housework.

A motivation or reason for doing specific household tasks was that the fathers felt that they 'needed doing', when they were asked about how they felt about the tasks that they undertook. A good cross-section of fathers in the sample displayed this orientation towards housework:

... I am much more, "yes, that job needs to be done, but it'll still be there tomorrow, and more convenient to do it now". If you see what I mean.
Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

... it's got to be done. At the end of the day, they've got to be done for the running of the home.
Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

... for example, if I didn't bother to iron for a few weeks, I'd only have more to do at the end of the two weeks. So if you don't do it, it all grounds to a halt. It's just part and parcel of everyday living.
Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

Common to all these accounts is that these fathers report that they will undertake domestic labour if they feel that there is a practical and real need for the tasks to be carried out, and that if they are left, it will affect the running of their households. Seeing the need for tasks to be done, and then doing them as a result, covered a wide variety of household chores: ironing, general maintenance, laundry, washing up, hoovering and preparing food were all mentioned. One father felt that this particular orientation towards domestic labour was a "typical male point of view".

Partners' Opinions on Fathers' Domestic Labour

When the fathers were asked about how they felt that their partners viewed their participation in domestic labour, their answers fell broadly into two kinds of responses – either that their partners were happy with their level of participation, or that they were not so pleased. Where the partners were seen to be more positive about fathers' domestic labour, their gratitude emerged, and they were reported to be appreciative of the fathers' efforts:

> Erm, I think she's grateful that I help out a lot.
>
> Chris, Communications, manager (12 and 9)

> ... I think she's grateful. But she doesn't get a lot of rest with two children living at home. You haven't got much time, and that can be a hindrance too.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

It is interesting to note that all the fathers who described their partners as being grateful for their performance of household tasks were employed in the Communications Company. A few other fathers felt that their partners were 'happy' with their level of participation in household chores. Another father appeared to take considerable pride in reporting that his partner saw him as being very helpful:

> Well, she told her Dad to write into his speech at the wedding, the fact that I always seem to be found watching the telly with an ironing board. And he wrote that into the

> speech, so it had enough of an effect on her for that to happen. She says that I'm very good, I'm very helpful and that kind of thing, but it doesn't really stick because I know there's always more jobs to do and I know it's just what I would normally have done anyway. So it's nice to be sort of recognised for doing things.
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

In contrast, it emerged in the accounts of other fathers that their partners were, at times, quite critical of fathers' housework, even to the extent that fathers reported that they would rather do the tasks themselves:

> ... I'm not allowed to do the shopping, because I might go shopping, I might go to Aldi. And she'll get upset because they're cheap! (laughs) We had a conversation about it a year ago, I said, "we ought to go to Aldi, and I'll go do the shopping and I'll go to Aldi". She said, "you go to Aldi to do the shopping and I'll kill myself!". Which I thought was a bit drastic! (laughs) I suppose she doesn't trust me to do any shopping! Because I'll go, I'll go and buy the cheap things instead of the dear things! (laughs)
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

These fathers felt that their partners had standards which they did not reach when performing the tasks. Trust appeared to be important here. In one case, one father described how he saw his partner as 'forbidding' him to undertake specific chores, even though he reported that he was prepared to do them. In these cases, the fathers did not feel that their partners negotiated with them to undertake more tasks. Other fathers did not problematise what one father referred to as his partner's 'possessiveness' of certain chores. Another consideration that fathers reported their partners using to judge their skills at domestic labour was the speed with which they undertook tasks:

> ... I can iron; it's just my wife's quicker at it and moans when I take so long, so (laughs).
>
> Steve, Plant (20, 17 and 3)

In these instances, it would seem from the fathers' accounts that partners could potentially act as 'gatekeepers' (Allen and Hawkins, 1999) for some fathers participation in domestic labour – in so far as they can mediate the tasks that fathers undertake.

However, some of the fathers felt that their partners would ideally like them to take a greater share of household tasks:

> *How do you feel about the amount of jobs that you do around the house?*
> In volume, it does feel that I do a fair percentage of it. But I know that's probably not in reality! (laughs) I think men's perception of work is different to women's. Sometimes they feel a bit hard done by in having to do things. Commitment to doing it, I've never had any issues about that now... sometimes she does point out to me that perhaps I'm er, I could be a bit more proactive but er, I always try my best to accommodate her!
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

In several cases, it was more housework in general that the fathers described their partners as wanting them to do. For a few others, there were specific tasks that they reported their partners as wanting them to undertake, or to take a share of. These were DIY in the first instance and ironing in the second. Therefore, not all partners were presented in the fathers' accounts as being discouraging of their participating more in household jobs; in fact they were felt to be keen for the fathers to do more. This demonstrates that what the fathers perceive to be their partners' views of their contribution to housework is important to them, and that some partners can facilitate fathers' involvement in domestic labour by negotiating with them to participate more.

Fathers' Opinions on Partners' Domestic Labour

Fathers expressed their gratitude towards their partners for undertaking chores, when they were asked about how they felt about the tasks that their partners did. We have seen that some fathers

reported that their partners were 'grateful' that they took a share in tasks. One father displayed his gratitude that his partner did the extent of chores she did thus:

> I mean (pauses) she's a driven person. And (pauses) though I'm very grateful that she does more than I do...
>
> Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

> My wife's jobs are necessary, so she gets on with her stuff and I do mine. I'm very grateful that she's doing these tasks and that I can get my stuff done too.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

The fathers who expressed their gratitude recognised the pivotal role that their partners had in the running of their homes, and how they were reliant upon them to an extent. This stands in contrast to the nature of how the partners' reported gratitude, where they were seen to be pleased that the fathers took *some* share in their domestic chores. Not all the fathers who did markedly fewer tasks than their partners felt this guilt though. A few fathers described how they were happy with this arrangement and that they felt that their partners were too:

> ... I genuinely believe that she's quite happy to do it, and er, and that's reflected in what she's, the majority of the life at home. So she doesn't see it as much of a chore.
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

These responses were typically made by fathers who had also described their partners' perceived possessiveness of domestic tasks. Some fathers explained that they felt that their partners saw undertaking the bulk of the domestic chores as their role in the running of the home. Where fathers felt that their partners attached great importance to undertaking tasks, it limited the fathers' reported participation.

Some fathers argued that their partners undertook domestic labour when it was unnecessary; they simply did not see the need for it to be done:

Erm, do you have any opinion on the jobs that she does around the house?
... I think she does more than needs to be done quite often. But, you know, I think you'll find in lots of families you see that.

Jonathan, HealthTrust, consultant (6 and 2)

Fathers who reportedly undertook a greater share in domestic chores made these comments in their interviews. It would seem that they had their own views on when certain tasks need to be done, and that having an involvement would lead to them having their own views. One father, a senior staff nurse who had a shift parenting arrangement with his partner, felt that he and his partner had very different approaches to housework:

How do you feel about the housework that your wife does?
... she's more picky than me, you know, I'll just clean things whereas she'll clean and polish, you know... I wish she could do it a bit quicker, you know, sometimes because really don't see the need to go around polishing things. As long as things are clean and you know, put away, that's all that matters. But she's a bit of a perfectionist. Its got to be just so.

Adam, HealthTrust, clinical role (18 months and 3)

We have seen how fathers reported that they had the motivation to undertake chores when they felt that they 'need doing'. It may be that they hold differing ideas of what 'needs doing'. Two fathers described these differing dispositions as having a gendered nature:

Have there been any times, or circumstances that you've been under when you've perhaps done more of the housework, or less of the housework?
Erm, yeah. I mean if there's been occasions where, I dunno, say my wife has been hospitalised, or something like that, then yes... Erm, I suppose it's not to say that I wouldn't do it, but it's just something I suppose. I think there's a different sort of, one of the differences between myself and my wife, we've got different outlooks on how things should be done... I've got a, for instance, I've perhaps got a typical male point of view (laughs). You know, I'll do things as and when they need doing, etcetera, etcetera. Whereas my wife is sort of, is sort of quite impatient and wants to do things there and then to get them out of the way. Erm, so we've got two different ways of looking at things... Erm, you know, things that worry her don't necessarily worry me.

Phillip, HealthTrust, advisor (7 and 5)

If we talk about the jobs that you do around the house. What sorts of jobs do you do normally?
... Tidying up, I'll tidy up now. I'll sort of tidy up because I can't find things. I think yes, I think this follows typical sexual predilections or gender predilections of men, but men want to do things they can see the results of. We cannot cope with doing things we can't see the results of.

Mark, HealthTrust, accountant, adoptive father (6)

Other fathers were not so extreme in viewing their different dispositions as being gender-based, but there remained fathers who felt they had a different 'ethic' than their partners. One father who described his high level of involvement in domestic labour felt that his partner would just 'automatically gravitate towards' doing certain tasks. This demonstrates that these ideas are not only held by fathers with a more limited involvement in domestic tasks, but may instead be wide-reaching in their influence. However, one father felt that performing domestic tasks differently or holding different standards was just something that had to be accepted between partners:

What do you think of the jobs that your wife normally carries out?
... I think sometimes she can be a bit picky because everyone's got their own way of doing things, erm, just like putting clothes away in the airing cupboard or hanging clothes on the line, or erm, washing and ironing, cleaning. Everyone does it in their own way, so you just have to learn with other people's ways of doing it.

Duncan, Communications, manager (17 and 13)

Holding differing standards towards domestic labour can potentially cause difficulties, but in this case, the father felt that the difficulties could be overcome by just accepting the differing standards as something that everyone has.

This overview of the household tasks that fathers reported undertaking, as well as their accounts of how they negotiated their tasks with their partners points to a degree of diversity amongst the fathers. It was seen that the fathers with partners in full-time employment reported taking a

greater share of domestic tasks. The times of partners' employment also has some impact when partners worked part-time hours, as some fathers shift parented. Interpersonal relationships between partners are also important, particularly with regards as to whether fathers 'own' or help with tasks. In the sample fathers' descriptions pointed to a diverse range of task allocation with meanings behind them, which leant themselves to the groupings which are presented in the rest of this chapter. However, as opposed to viewing the fathers' accounts as being reduced to a crude typology, it is more true to the data to view them, following Barker's (1994) approach to researching lone fathers' masculinities, as places on a continuum. The groups of fathers in this study share a similar, but not necessarily identical positioning on the continuum of their participation in domestic chores. Having added this explanatory note, we turn to a discussion of the characteristics of the fathers that reported undertaking the least domestic labour in the sample.

'Traditional'[29] Fathers: "I'm pretty happy about it because I don't do much!"

Two fathers self-defined their division of labour as being of a 'traditional' nature. Both were employed in the public sector, one from the Health Trust and the other from the Local Authority. The father from the Health Trust was the only father in the study who worked compressed hours, which enabled him to spend a day on alternate weeks away from work. The other father had

[29] I have reservations about the use of the term 'traditional' in categorising these fathers' relative lack of participation in everyday domestic tasks. McMahon (1999:71) has argued that:

> Applying the label 'traditional' to a low level of participation invites us to assume that such was the typical practice in the past, and since not all men are labelled 'traditional' we are invited to see change... In effect, any sign of variance in male domestic work can be used to identify a group which points to the future... However, if the past was not quite so 'traditional' as we are asked to believe, it may well be that practices which are not really novel have become visible simply because they fit a contemporary agenda.

The assumptions underpinning the usage of the term 'traditional' in this context have led me to consider whether in utilising it I am merely reifying notions of male privilege in the home by somehow equating 'traditional' with 'natural' and 'ahistorical'. That both of these fathers described themselves as 'traditional' shows the vast cultural weight that this term carries. Ultimately, by defining their low level of participation as traditional would seem to attach a meaning to it whereby it is understood as being inevitable. Nevertheless, I have failed to conceptualise an alternative naming for this position in the typology I have constructed, but I have placed the term 'traditional' in inverted commas to indicate the problematic aspect of the word's use.

access to flexitime, and used it so that he started work relatively early in the morning and left earlier. In terms of their childcare involvement, the father from the Health Trust had two teenaged daughters and he reported that he ferried them and had a strong engagement in their education, by helping with homework and revision. The father from the Local Authority had two daughters who were not yet teenaged and described how he ferries them to activities, and that weekends were a time where he felt able to be involved. These fathers both presented themselves as having a relatively low level of participation in domestic tasks. As we shall see, their perceptions are correct when we turn to examining the other fathers in the sample:

> *What sorts of jobs would you do around the house on a typical day, or week?*
> Is my wife going to see this?! (laughs)
> *No! (laughs)*
> Oh, I do all of it! I do all of it! (laughs). Ah, I'm, I'm sorry to say this because I, you know, I do have a reasonable commitment to equalities, but we do fall into erm, the stereotype positions, I'm sorry. Er, I just, I'm just a hopeless cook, and I still have to end up. The only time I cook is when I burn it on the barbeque. Er, I do wash dishes. Erm, Christine [partner] just enjoys housework. She works part-time, so before, I'm afraid, I didn't do the dishes. I do things like do-it-yourself and work like that. I do regular washing up. I don't do much cleaning. I don't do any laundry... But, otherwise I, you know, I, you know, we don't really have that equal a household. Perhaps because I used to work full-time and Christine doesn't. And perhaps because of Chris doesn't, she doesn't mind it. Erm, I do occasional cooking. I would, but not a huge amount. I honestly hate to think, if someone was assessing us for equalities in the housework, they'd say, "Oh my God, what a sort of an uneven position". When we have a Sunday joint, I carve the meat, she does all the rest, you know! (laughs) At least I'm conscious of it, that we should, you know, you should have it more equal! But we're both content with it, so we tend to leave it at that! (laughs)
>
> Alan, HealthTrust, advisor (16 and 14)

In this example, these fathers' low level of participation in housework is justified by reference to their working hours. In this instance, Alan's partner has returned to part-time working hours, but this does not challenge the division of labour that was established whilst she was not in paid employment. This instance is demonstrative of how the primacy accorded to the male career (Pyke, 1996) can be utilised by men to both underpin and justify unequal divisions of labour in the home. In this instance, the status accorded in their relationship to this fathers' paid

employment has not been challenged, even when his partner has returned to the labour market. This demonstrates that females' paid employment may not always challenge established divisions of labour in the home. It is curious that this father, in other points of his interview, presented himself as having a degree of autonomy over his working hours which was linked to his position of relative seniority. However, his scope for flexibility does not appear to have extended or translated into a day-to-day participation, in the work of the home.

In both these relationships, the fathers reported that domestic labour tended to be carried out whilst they were at work, which thus contributes to its 'invisible' nature (DeVault, 1991):

> *So could you tell me about the jobs around the house that you do?*
> (laughs)
> *Or that you tend to do?*
> (laughs) Er, not a lot to be honest. Er, because she's home all day, she's done most of the cleaning. I do help her with the washing up. I can't cook. So she does the cooking. Erm, I can cook to survive, but I can't cook to make it edible. Erm, so she tends to do that... 'cos she's home all day, she pretty much does all the household things.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

If their partners mostly carry out domestic tasks in the fathers' absences, it excludes, and ultimately excuses them from the labour, as they are not present when the bulk of the work is undertaken. This means that both fathers have a limited knowledge of their household's domestic routines and, coupled with their absence from home, it disadvantages them if they wish to negotiate taking on a greater share of the tasks at home. Although it later emerges that other fathers in the sample also use their absences through paid work commitments to justify their lack of participation, the traditional fathers can be distinguished by their lack of involvement in domestic chores.

However, both traditional fathers reported undertaking some domestic labour. It is notable that these tasks are undertaken on weekends. One father makes porridge for his partner and two teenaged daughters on a Saturday morning, which he describes as a 'family tradition'. That this task has been labelled in a way that accords it with a significance in their household demonstrates the weight that this father's performance of this task carries in terms of its meaning. This mirrors Backett's (1982) point that occasional tasks which make a relatively lesser contribution to the household can have a differing subjective interpretation. Constructing a task that a father carries out once a week as a 'family tradition' also makes it visible, which contrasts with breakfast preparations that are made during the rest of the week, which he does not comment upon.

The other 'traditional' father described spending considerable amounts of time during the weekends on DIY projects:

> *Do you tend to do things like DIY, or just general tasks?*
> A lot. Yes. We're on our third house that we're doing up.
> *... How long do you spend on these jobs, say the average week?*
> DIY, I'll be working every weekend, probably both days. Er, so that's pretty much that.
>
> Andrew, Council, officer (11 and 9)

Renovating a house requires a considerable time commitment during fathers' leisure time. However, fathers can undertake DIY as a form of leisure. It is also notable that the conditions under which DIY is undertaken, namely that fathers can choose to take on substantial projects, contrast with other types of domestic labour, which are part of an everyday cycle of task management and accomplishment (Hochschild, 1989). Others document the visibility of DIY (Chapman, 2004) and that it constitutes a form of 'self-provisioning' (Pahl, 1984; Doucet, 2006). In this instance, the father may negotiate with his partner so that her undertaking of routine

domestic labour and his house renovating is seen as a fair distribution of domestic labour. The roles that this father reports negotiating with regards to domestic labour relate to traditions where males hold responsibility for undertaking DIY and maintenance tasks (Baxter, 2002; Edgell, 1980; Coltrane, 1996). For these fathers, it is curious that they both have access to and utilise flexible working arrangements, and that their reported involvement in childcare appears to share similarities with other fathers of children of the same age, and yet they have a relatively low participation in domestic labour.

Fathers who Leave Domestic Tasks to their Partners: "She's on a mission"

This is another small group of two fathers, both employed in the Car Parts Plant. As with the other fathers from the Plant, they did not have access to formal flexible working arrangements. One of these fathers has a young, infant daughter for whom he assists his partner in providing some caregiving activities, such as bathing, during the evenings. In comparison with the other fathers of infants in the study, he did not report having the greatest share in the care of his daughter; for instance, others were involved in night time caregiving activities. The other father has a primary school-aged son and his accounts of his care show commonalities with other fathers of children in that age group, in that, he ferried his son to activities and played with him; weekends were seen as an important time of involvement. Similar to the traditional fathers, they presented their partners as 'owning' the responsibility for everyday domestic tasks, with the fathers holding responsibility for maintenance and gardening. In contrast to the traditional fathers, these men are unable to discuss their lack of participation in domestic tasks with reference to their partners' presence in their homes, since one of these fathers has a partner working full-time, whilst the other works reduced hours with flexitime. These fathers drew upon a rather different line of reasoning in their interview accounts.

Both fathers presented their partners as preferring to perform tasks themselves. In the instance below, the father describes how obstructive he feels that his partner's standards can be:

> *How do you feel about the amount of jobs that you do around the house?*
> (laughs) I could probably do a lot more, to be honest! (laughs) The way my wife is, I just don't get a chance anyway. If I did, I do do the hoovering now and again, but my wife will just go over it and do it again, anyway. Because she's just got, it's in her head that she has to do the hoovering. And it doesn't matter, as clean as the floor might be, she'll just go over it again, because, just to satisfy herself. Whether I've done a good enough job, I don't know! (laughs) That's how she is!
>
> Stuart, Plant, manual (11 months)

In light of his partner's standards, he is not seen to be able to perform the task adequately. The issue of standards for task accomplishment has been well documented (Oakley, 1974; Martin, 1984; DeVault 1991; Bittman and Lovejoy, 1993; Thompson and Walker, 1989). However, he feels unable to negotiate with his partner to engage with or challenge his partner's stance towards this task. He sees the way in which she 'gatekeeps' (Allen and Hawkins, 1999) the standards that underpin the successful completion of this task is seen to be a part of her nature, which he feels unable to negotiate. The way in which his partner is reported to invoke standards becomes relegated to an issue which another father described as a 'personal choice', of a 'greater need' (Hochschild, 1989) to do the chore. This explanation of a partner's propensity to hoover is constructed as an irrational stance (c.f. Bittman and Lovejoy, 1993) with which this father cannot negotiate. That standards are invoked in both of these fathers' interviews contrasts with the two 'traditional' fathers, where these difficulties were not mentioned – possibly they were not raised as their partners carried out the majority of day-to-day household tasks.

Both fathers felt that their partners did not object to their low participation in domestic tasks. They described their partners as preferring to hold the responsibility for the running of their homes:

What do you think your partner feels about the tasks that she does?
I think she's fine with what she does... Generally, I think she likes to do it... Well she's happy to let me sort out all the technical things and electrical things.

Joe, Plant (6)

The traditional fathers also offered similar justifications in their interviews. However, both of these Plant fathers reported that they did carry out tasks when their partners asked for their help:

Is there anything that would help you to do more around the house?
Erm (laughs), I don't know! Probably my wife telling me, "you've got to do it"! (laughs) You know.

Stuart, Plant (11 months)

These fathers report themselves as willing to perform domestic tasks, but they feel that they need their partners' direction for them to do so. Their partners were reported to negotiate with the fathers to undertake a greater share of tasks around the house, and so their participation in household tasks remains at a modest level. When compared with childcare, these fathers have negotiated a lesser role with regards to domestic chores. As these fathers did not have access to formal flexible working arrangements, they were not involved in morning time routines with children, which contrasts with other groups of fathers in the study.

Piecemeal Participation: "If I've got time I'll put the hoover across"

A group of eight fathers reported undertaking domestic chores on a more regular basis, but it was not compulsory for them to do these tasks. Only one public sector father from the Health Trust fell into this group. The group also includes two Car Parts Plant fathers who both had partners in part-time employment, and all five Communications Company fathers. Three of these fathers had partners who worked part-time and two partners worked reduced hours. Term-time working was also popular amongst the partners of the Communications fathers. This group have a mixed

access to and take-up of flexible working arrangements. The father from the Health Trust works flexitime, and the Communications Company has formal flexible working policies but only two fathers have accessed them. As with the other fathers employed in the Plant, the two fathers in this group did not have access to formalised flexible working arrangements. These fathers reported differing involvement in care, but this relates to how these fathers have children of differing ages. The father from the Health Trust reported taking his children to school and playing; he said that weekends were an important time to spend with children. Three of the five Communications fathers had teenage children and their accounts emphasised their involvement in shaping children's values. One father reported a role in facilitating children's completion of homework. Two fathers had primary school-aged children and they spoke of changes in their relationships as they felt that they increasingly ferried their children. One of these fathers also had a two-year daughter and had a responsibility for providing over night and morning time routine care to his children whilst his partner was at work. Hoovering and washing up emerged as particularly popular tasks in the analysis of their interview accounts. However, there were differences within this group in the tasks that fathers reported undertaking, as the Communications Company fathers said that they ironed and washed clothes, which the other three fathers did not report.

It was in this group that when the fathers were asked about how they felt that their partners viewed their participation in household tasks; that their gratitude towards their partners emerged:

> *Your wife, what does she think about that jobs that you tend to do?*
> Erm, I think on the whole, and she has said this, that she does appreciate that I perhaps do more around the house than some of her friends' husbands and partners do... Erm, but I think she does appreciate that er, you know on the scale of things, you know, she does get er, she does get help. And does get cooperation.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

It appears that this father's help is not necessarily expected, with his partner viewing it as a 'bonus' (Gilroy, 1999). In other fathers' accounts of partners' seeming gratitude to them for their performance of domestic tasks, there is reference to a normative understanding of how much domestic labour 'other' men undertake. Hochschild (2003) discerned a similar dynamic in her research with couples, which was underpinned by a 'pragmatic' nature of judgement. Although cultural notions of how much housework other men contribute to in the homes are powerful, it is difficult for someone to discern whether their partner contributes more or less than their generalised perception[30]. A pragmatic view can work as an elastic understanding that may accommodate and even praise relatively low levels of participation.

Many of these fathers also expressed their gratitude towards their partners for the domestic tasks that they undertook:

> *How does that make you feel?* [the amount of time that his partner spends on domestic labour]
> It incriminates me! (laughs) I am appreciative, but she says that I don't show it. I recognise that she does a lot more than me and that if she stopped doing it, things would ground to a halt.
>
> Tom, Communications, manager, stepfather (21, 19 and 16)

The nature of gratitude here is in marked contrast to the ways in which fathers' felt that their partners were grateful for their help. In this instance, the father's gratitude is underpinned by a sense of his dependency upon his partner for the routine accomplishment of household labour. He implies that the responsibility for day-to-day domestic tasks rests with his partner. Thus, the double-faced nature of gratitude (Hochschild, 1989) rests upon a distinction drawn in the fathers'

[30] If partners were reported to have made comparisons with how much domestic labour fathers' carried out with their own participation, perhaps it would not be seen in such significant terms. Ultimately, if fathers draw comparisons, they are made:

> ... to other men rather than to their own partners, they could and did view their participation as admirable and their sacrifices as significant.
>
> Gerson (1993:228)

accounts between help and responsibility for performing daily household tasks. These fathers are able to be 'helping' fathers who seemingly 'opt in' on domestic tasks in a relatively non-committal manner because their partners carry the emotional burden (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995) of this work.

In understanding the fathers' construction of their partners as largely responsible for domestic work, the ways in which fathers talked about their working hours came into play. The helping fathers had partners who worked either part-time or reduced hours, which like the accounts of the two 'traditional' fathers was seen to underpin their greater domestic roles:

> *If you had to estimate how much time your wife spends doing these sorts of jobs, how much would it be? Again, in a day, or week?*
> ... she works part-time and I know that the rest of her working week is probably spent with all of these jobs and still more to do in the evenings. I estimate that she probably spends about er, thirty, thirty-five hours a week. When I think, it's probably four or five hours every day that she's er, doing something... And she works part-time, so she sort of comes and goes throughout the day and fits the jobs in, and that's something that I would like to be able to do more. You know, rather than blocking out huge hours of work time, and to be a bit more flexible in the time available to er, to have a share in the normal household er, management. Not that work isn't important, but just doesn't block out those huge amounts of time that it can do otherwise.
>
> Matthew, Communications, manager (19, 16 and 14)

This father presents his full-time work as 'blocking out' time, which he feels constrains his participation. Although this is similar to the reasoning deployed by the 'traditional' fathers, the helping group of fathers are distinguishable by how their paid employment does not exclude them from participating in some routine tasks. These fathers felt that working part-time gave their partners a greater degree of availability to undertake chores. These fathers neutrally present their partners' day-to-day responsibility for household work as a matter of mere practicality (Goodnow and Bowes, 1994). Therefore, their partners' responsibilities are not presented as a

straightforward issue of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) in their households, but in the more gender neutral terms of convenience.

Hoovering was a relatively popular task amongst the 'helping' fathers, but their participation of this chore was not on a routine basis. For instance, this father feels that he is not under any particular obligation from his partner to hoover:

> *What does your partner think about the housework that you do?*
> Nothing. No. There's no problem, you know, if I hoover or if I don't. I hoover because I don't like mess. So, I do, you know, tidy up if the boys have messed it up. You know, I will for my own preferences. If I don't do it, if I'm doing something else, my wife will have no problem in doing it when she comes home.
>
> Steve, Plant (20, 17 and 3)

Although these fathers provided 'help' to their partners, it did not equate with having the ultimate responsibility for the completion of tasks and the running of the home (McMahon, 1999). This illuminates the supplementary nature of the 'helping' fathers' participation. Furthermore, by occasionally hoovering, these fathers may be demonstrating their willingness to undertake household tasks. This contributes to a sense of fairness in the household division of labour, without fundamentally challenging their partners' daily responsibility for cleaning and hoovering (Coltrane, 1996).

A clear difference that emerged from the analysis within this group was the reported willingness of the Communications Company fathers to iron. As with the other tasks, it was mostly carried out when their partners did not have the time to do so. Only one father in this group owned a portion of the ironing, as he ironed his own clothes. These fathers presented themselves as carrying out a wider selection of tasks, but they were not drawn into them as part of a routine. In contrast, the fathers that did not iron in this group, or the two other groups presented thus far,

made light in their interviews of how they do not iron – this was a particular feature of the Car Parts Plant fathers' interviews. By contrast, the Communications Company fathers were comfortable talking about ironing. It may be that the Plant fathers perceived ironing to be a 'feminine' task, and in this light, their humorous stance may be seen as an example of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Two of the 'helping' fathers described how they performed other tasks as a means of negotiating with partners who undertook this task, which they disliked. In the account below, the father deploys humour in his willingness to do the washing up, so that he did not have to iron:

> *What does your wife think about the jobs that you do around the house?*
> I don't do enough! (laughs)
> *So that's what she thinks!?*
> I won't do the ironing! (laughs) That's what it comes down to, whilst the ironing pile gets a bit too big, because er, the pressure's on then... The ironing gets over the side of the basket and that's it then it's, "you're not doing it!" (laughs). So I say, "you'll, you do that and I'll carry on with the dishes!" (laughs) That's the thing, isn't it? Like that's her thing, she likes the ironing.
>
> Paul, Plant (9 and 8)

This father's participation is facilitated by his partner who makes him aware that she feels unhappy about doing the ironing, and openly negotiates with him to carry out this task. This contrasts with the previous two groups of fathers who did not report that their partners negotiated with them to undertake chores.

(Relative) Sharers: "Our home's quite busy, we both work, and whatever's there to be done, needs to be done"

The group of '(relative) sharers' is comprised of nine fathers. Three of these fathers are employed in the Car Parts Plant, one of whom shift parents. The other two Plant fathers in this group, although they do not work flexibly, have partners who work full-time, and both have a longer distance commute to their places of work than the fathers. Two of these fathers have

partners in full-time employment and each has one primary-school aged child. In addition, one father had been a lone father in the past, whilst the other was a stepfather who had carried out some housework in his family as a child. The two fathers in this group that worked for the Local Authority and worked flexitime were both the fathers of infants. One father also had a fifteen year-old daughter and his partner worked reduced hours, whilst the other father's partner was on maternity leave before returning to work part-time, and they had another daughter aged three. Three of the five Health Trust fathers also fell into this group. One is the father of two young children who shift parents. The other two Health Trust fathers had partners who worked part-time hours and felt that they were not responsible for a great share of domestic tasks, but relative to the other fathers in the sample, they took on a more substantial share, which was anchored in a routine. One of these fathers worked flexitime and was the adoptive father of a primary school-aged daughter and ferried her to school. The other two Health Trust fathers did not have access to flexitime, although one father felt that his seniority gave him some scope for autonomy over his working hours. Both fathers had young children, one of these shift parented and the other father had a strong involvement in caregiving, such as bathing, night time care and their morning routines.

These fathers described how they did more cleaning as they had made efforts to have what they felt to be a fairer domestic division of labour. A father who had been a lone parent, but had subsequently repartnered, undertook the cleaning on a Saturday morning, which was the time when he and his partner had set aside to undertake the majority of their housework routine:

> *What kinds of jobs around the house does your partner do?*
> Erm, I hate cleaning the kitchen, so she tends to concentrate on the kitchen. Erm, and then I do the bathrooms and toilets and hoovering and cleaning. Erm, and then we split the ironing, I do mine and Chloe's, she does hers, and then, this may sound puerile, but I hate ironing duvets, so she does the duvet every week. So, you know it's a split, we work well, she's downstairs, while I'm upstairs. And when I've

> finished upstairs, she's upstairs washing floors perhaps, and I'm downstairs hoovering. So, it's a team effort, I suppose.
>
> George, Council, officer, repartnered lone father (23, 20 and 6)

This father's cleaning was part of a well-established routine which appears to be relatively fixed, with each partner complementing each other's contribution by specialising in and 'owning' their set of tasks.

Fathers' negotiation of the support that they provided for their partners emerged in the accounts given by two fathers of infants' explanations of their relatively high participation in chores. In the care chapter, both of these fathers expressed their hesitancy concerning their abilities to care for infants, even though they felt this was only a temporary constraint. Both fathers reported that their partners specialised in caregiving whilst they took a complementary responsibility for domestic labour:

> *How do you think your wife feels about the tasks that you normally do?*
> I think that my wife feels that our set up works well. She would find it hard to do what I do and likewise, I would find it hard to do what she does. The things that I do allow her to get on with what she's doing. So whilst my wife gets the baby ready for bed, I will go and prepare some food.
>
> Robert, Council, officer (18 months and 15)

> *What sorts of jobs do you do around the home on a normal day, or across a week?*
> I will do the cleaning; the dishes, and I always cook the dinner. My wife tends to get the kids sorted, so she'll take the time to do that and I'll do some housework... When I get home from work, I'll cook the dinner, and whilst I'm doing this, my wife will bathe the girls and feed them. At 7.30 they're in bed.
>
> Daniel, Council, assistant (6 months and 3)

The fathers' cooking is built into a daily routine. The accounts given by the fathers in this group provide a stark contrast with the findings on other studies, which point to women not expecting to receive male help with domestic labour (Gilroy, 1999) and that men try to avoid disliked tasks (Edgell 1980). These fathers are performing tasks which are part of the cycle of their

household's domestic routines, and in this, they point to the diversity of fathers' domestic practices in this sample. It is not merely a case of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) with fixed views on which partner performs household work.

Two fathers reported that they contributed to ironing, by taking responsibility for ironing their own clothes, and in some cases, children's clothes. This stepfather, when asked about the tasks that he carried out, responded that he ironed regularly:

> ... if there's cricket or rugby on the television I'll take myself into another room with a pile of ironing and do that kind of thing... I've got one rule: I'm the only person who irons my shirts. That's my strange little rule. I won't really be happy if someone else ironed my shirt, I'd wear it with a kind of semi-thankful grimace. But, yeah, 'cause if the mother-in-law comes to stay or we're at someone else's house and they offer, "would you like anything to be ironed?" I say, "not the shirt!" (laughs)... You can do anything else, but my shirts, I'll take care of those...
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

This shows that there may be some fluidity in the fathers' household practices (Chapman, 2004) and the resulting division of labour that they negotiate with their partners, which the relative privacy of the domestic sphere may facilitate (Morgan, 1996). Ironing is an activity which this father reports as undertaking, whilst he also watches sport on television. He makes his ironing more palatable by doing it whilst there is something to distract him. This parallels a strategy used by some full-time homemakers in Oakley's (1974) study to overcome the monotonous and repetitive nature of ironing. The notion of trust that this father draws upon is curious as it implies a sense of ownership, and even possessiveness, over some aspects of this task. As the discussion of the small group of fathers, who largely left domestic tasks to their partners demonstrated, other fathers felt that their partners were unwilling for them to undertake certain chores. This stepfather's stance over ironing parallels these fathers' accounts of their partners' 'gatekeeping'

(Allen and Hawkins, 1999). However, this remains the only instance in the data of a father discussing strict ownership of what was largely regarded as a female task.

As with the 'helping' fathers, partners' standards of their judgements about fathers' competence were raised. In this group, standards persist as an issue where tasks are not 'owned' and are reportedly undertaken by both partners. In the (relative) sharers' accounts, these dynamics were not so obstructive to fathers' participation. These fathers did not reflect on the use of perceived incompetence as a means to defer to their partners when negotiating their performance of tasks. In this instance, this stepfather describes how he and his partner have engaged in discussions with each other, in order to overcome their differences:

> *How do you feel about these tasks?*
> ... I think that everyone thinks that some of the tasks are unnecessary, and some of them are complicated by other tasks. The fact that my wife already had a home, and systems and ways of doing things before I came along and complicated everything. It does take a while to kind of mesh into somebody else's systems. And sometimes, I'll be doing a job, and I'll be doing it the way that I've done it for 36 years, and it won't be quite the same, and there'll be a discussion about, "well, why did you do it this way? Why didn't you do it that way?" And sometimes that can slow things down. Petty and trivial things these, I'm not saying these are huge. Sometimes they're jobs that happen, that's why we call them 'jobs'. Sometimes they're jobs that need to be done. One person will identify them as need to be done, and the other will say, "well, that doesn't seem really to be, you know, necessary", and somebody else will say, "well, I don't think I'll be comfortable if I know that that's still undone".
>
> Ian, Council, officer, stepfather (7)

In this case, the father reports how he and his partner have openly negotiated over when tasks need to be carried out. Some of the other fathers in this group described how standards had led to difficulties, even to the point where both partners are critical of each other's performance of certain chores, but they seemingly resolved to accept their differences in opinion. Other fathers reported how differences in standards resulted in them undertaking some tasks slightly less than their partners, as they claimed that they were less able, at times, to recognise the need for them to

be done. However, the fathers in this group perform more tasks than the 'helping' fathers as they were relatively more tied to their day-to-day accomplishment. These fathers were more likely to talk about how they share and there were different means of sharing in this group, such as having fluidity with regards to who performs tasks (two fathers) or having responsibility for the accomplishment of specific tasks which they 'owned'.

In contrast to both the 'traditional' and helping' groups of fathers, their partners' working hours appeared to draw fathers into performing domestic tasks. This father reports that his partner's daily commute to her full-time job has led him to prepare the cooked evening meals in their household:

> *And if we talk now about the jobs that you do around the house. What sorts of jobs would you do around the house, normally?*
> Erm, alright... I try to help out as much as I can because as I say, I work, we work about the same hours, but because the wife, my wife has to travel, you know she's got like erm, about thirty to forty minutes travelling each way, so you know, perhaps longer really, so. So, I don't mind getting the food on.
>
> Colin, Plant (9)

Thus, these fathers' viewed their partners' paid employment as facilitating their participation in domestic tasks. The times of partners' employment (c.f. Thompson and Walker, 1989) influenced other fathers in this group, particularly those that shift parented. Partners' times of absence through paid work mean that fathers are present in the home alone. This provides them with opportunities to undertake tasks and to become more familiar with the standards that underpin their completion.

Lone Fathers: "I had to become a dab hand around the house really, because I was on my own... So, ironing, washing, cleaning, you name it"

The accounts of the two lone fathers pointed to their day-to-day responsibility for accomplishing domestic labour. These fathers, in their accounts, tended to view tasks as being carried out in relation to their children as a kind of 'service' to them. This lone father describes how he fits in his laundry routine in relation to his children's care:

> And then they're off to bed. And then I start sorting out what's in the washing machine, or putting things away on hangers, clearing the radiators.
>
> Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

The lone father's description of clothes care underlines how his performance of these tasks is experienced as a series of daily 'never-ending cycles' (Coltrane, 1996). Since lone fathers do not reside with partners, they themselves perceive when tasks need to be accomplished, and are therefore responsible for the running of their homes. In these fathers' accounts, the notion of domestic labour as a form of care for their children came to the fore. In this sense, they reported their understandings of domestic tasks as a 'labour of love' (Graham, 1983), which was responsive to the perceived needs of their children. This mirrors Burgoyne and Clark's (1983) point that lone fathers' cooking can have a symbolic meaning as a form of care. The same may happen with other tasks.

However, there are limits to the tasks that both fathers report undertaking, as this father demonstrates with regard to ironing:

> *How about general everyday sorts of tasks, those sorts of things?*
> Yeah, yeah. I do cleaning, ironing. I've got a fourteen-year-old daughter so, you know how much washing you've got to do there. But my mother lives very close, and she does a lot of my er, ironing mainly. Because I can do the washing, put the washing in the washing machine, but ironings a bit... I have tried, like, but er, there's

> still creases in them, so if I need like, my work clothes and erm, my daughter's clothes, I take them out to my mother. And she's, well she's nearly eighty so it's something for her to do during the day, because she does get bored, because she's alone.
>
> David, Plant, divorced lone father (18 and 14)

This father discusses his reluctance to iron by referring to his incompetence. This demonstrates that lone fathers may have to familiarise themselves with the standards for the successful completion of domestic tasks (Fassinger, 1993), but not all fathers are able to, which can lead to difficulties. Curiously, this is also an example of an 'exploratory incident' (Backett, 1982), which this father draws upon to explain why he does not regularly iron clothes. However, this father's explanation does not occur with reference to a partner, but with his own standards, which he feels unable to meet, but he reports that his elderly mother is able to meet them. Therefore, dynamics that have been identified in previous studies around the issue of standards may have a wider applicability beyond those that share the same household.

It was not just with respect to ironing that others outside of lone fathers' households were reported to provide support to them. The lone father above, as well as receiving support from his mother, was also helped by his other daughter who had recently left home but lived locally. The other lone father describes how he receives some outside help:

> *Is there anything that helps you to do jobs around the house?*
> Family.
> *Family help?*
> My girlfriend, she helps out as well – when she can help. She's got her own home and her own children. She's got two grown up children. So that sort of runs into each other.
>
> Harry, Plant, lone father (14 and 11)

These fathers are in different household situations compared to the other fathers in the sample[31] but they are both report that they are able to receive help legitimately from some of their female relatives, and in one case, their new partner. Although they are in difficult circumstances, they are both able to have this help from females outside the home.

Summary

The chapter opened with an overview of the questions that the fathers were asked in their interviews about their participation in domestic labour. Open-ended questions were utilised in the interviews, and there are limitations in terms of fathers' memories and the resulting omissions, but they did lead to reflective accounts being collected from the fathers. Although some rich accounts were gathered from fathers, their limitations of this approach need to be remembered.

The chapter opened with an overview of the tasks that fathers perform and their accounts of them. Fathers' descriptions of their participation in domestic tasks uncovered the importance of interpersonal negotiations with their partners as mediating their participation. These included fathers' recognition of when tasks needed to be undertook, and they felt that this contrasted with their partners' sometimes unnecessary tasks. Where fathers felt that partners were pleased with their participation, they were grateful for the fathers' assistance. However, some fathers pointed out that their partners were critical of their performance of tasks. Partners' standards play an important role in these negotiations. In contrast, other fathers felt that their partners wanted them to do more around the home. Fathers were grateful for their partners taking the responsibility for household chores. Some felt 'guilty' about how their partners played this key role, but others described their partners as 'not minding'. These findings point to the diversity of the sample and

[31] The lone father who receives help from his mother and daughter had recently split up from his wife. The other lone father became a lone parent when his wife passed away whilst his children were young.

that the nature of fathers' participation in domestic labour was not 'given', but it was negotiated with their partners, with dynamics such as standards and gratitude, and the meanings given to them, a part of this process.

A typology of the fathers' negotiation of their participation in domestic chores was developed to unpack the diversity of fathers reported participation in domestic labour in the sample. The first group of fathers, with the least participation in domestic chores were the two men who self-defined as 'traditional' fathers. Both were employed in public sector organisations. Their reported lack of participation in domestic labour was made with a contextual reference to their partners' working hours. Both fathers had access to flexitime, but this did not facilitate them taking on a greater domestic role. Partners were described as carrying out tasks in the fathers' absences from their homes, which contributed to their invisibility. The second group were two Plant fathers who left tasks to their partners. Similar to the traditional fathers, partners owned the responsibility for routine domestic labour, whilst fathers carried out maintenance and gardening. These fathers did not describe their lack of participation by reference to partners' working hours, as one worked full-time and the other reduced hours. Both fathers felt that their partners 'chose' to do tasks and that their partners were critical of the standards to which they carried tasks out. However, these fathers did not engage with their partners' standards, they accepted them. Their partners' ownership of tasks and the underpinning standards was felt to limit these fathers' potential to negotiate their taking on a greater share of tasks. Both fathers explained that when their partners asked for their assistance with chores, they were willing to help.

A third group of eight fathers had a 'piecemeal' participation in domestic labour. Their contribution was on a more regular basis, but it was not reported to be compulsory. These fathers felt that they could choose to help their partners. They also felt that their partners were pleased

with their current participation, which indicates how their assistance was not expected. Partners' reported gratitude rested on elastic understandings of how much domestic labour men generally undertake. In this light, fathers' relatively low participation can receive praise. These fathers were grateful that their partners assumed the overall responsibility for domestic routines. This shows that gratitude was shaped by contextual factors. A distinction between help and responsibility was made in the interviews. Fathers spoke of their partners' responsibilities by reference to their working hours, so that women working part-time or reduced hours facilitated their domestic roles. In contrast, fathers presented their full-time work as absenting them from their homes, and constraining their involvement in domestic labour. This is similar to the traditional fathers' explanations, but these fathers' paid employment does not fully exclude them from participating in tasks. Hoovering and cleaning were popular, but these tasks were optional. Therefore, fathers' help did not equate with a substantial responsibility for task completion. The fathers from the Communications Company reported that they were willing to perform a wider selection of tasks, including ironing, but they did not do them on a routine basis.

The '(relative) sharers' were the fourth group of nine fathers. These fathers reported that they undertook more cleaning than the previous groups, as part of their negotiations with their partners of fairer divisions of labour. Fathers' performances of tasks were built into routines, such as the times that partners were at work, or when fathers assumed a responsibility for certain tasks. Some fathers undertook tasks as a way of supporting their partners, such as the two fathers who reported that they cooked evening meals whilst their partners provided care to their infant children. These fathers spoke about their partners' standards and the related issue of competence, particularly where tasks were not 'owned' by one partner. Fathers did not see this as obstructing their participation. As social agents, they were prepared to engage with partners' standards and to reach compromises. Furthermore, in terms of structure, their partners' working hours helped

to facilitate the fathers' involvement in chores. The absence of partners through paid work provided fathers with more opportunities to carry out tasks and to become more familiar with routines.

The two lone fathers carried out the most domestic labour. They held the everyday responsibility for tasks and they were tied to their performance as part of an overall domestic routine. Chores took on an extra meaning for these fathers as a form of care for children. However, there were limitations with regards to ironing, as fathers largely avoided this task with female kin undertaking it. This illustrates how these fathers were not always able to perform tasks to their own standards and that they were able to draw upon the help of female kin, outside of their households.

9.
Conclusion

The thesis opened by drawing our attention to the relevance of researching fathers' negotiations of paid employment, care and domestic labour in the context of current academic and policy concerns about work/life balance. Related to these debates, this study has been guided by three research questions, and it is in this final chapter that the conclusions from the fathers' interview accounts are related to these questions and the wider research literature. The thesis' conceptual contribution will also be reflected upon as well as the methodological issues that were faced, the resulting caveats about the study and some reflections on learning points. Finally, some policy recommendations that arise from the research findings are set out.

The first research question examined the types of employment practices that men adopt which take account (or not) of fathering. The sampling strategy situated fathers in their organisational contexts, with regards to what flexible working arrangements were on offer (whether through formal arrangements, or individual negotiations with line managers) and available leave arrangements for care purposes. It was found that the flexibility on offer across the four employers varied greatly. The five fathers sampled from the Council reported that flexitime arrangements were available and that they took them up so that they were able to vary the start and finishing times of their day-to-day working hours. All but one of these fathers had accessed paid paternity provisions; prior to its statutory introduction in 2003. The findings from this small-scale study have similarities with the findings from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey in that fathers taking paternity leave is more common in the public sector than in the private sector (Kersley et. al. 2006). Some had also accessed special leave arrangements for care purposes. These fathers felt that they were working for a supportive employer that recognised that at times, they might need to adapt their employment arrangements for their fathering

commitments, such as taking children to school and caring for them whilst they are unwell. Similarly, the five fathers from the Health Trust all reported that their employer had formal flexible working policies, however their take-up varied. These fathers negotiated what they felt to be a reasonable use of flexibility, given that they felt these practices were constrained by the '24/7' operation of the Health Trust and the services that it provides to patients. There was some evidence from two fathers, that the working culture of the Trust was experienced differently according to employees' grades. These were two fathers in relatively senior positions who felt able to assert themselves in informal negotiations with colleagues when they needed to take leave for care purposes. This raises questions of structure and agency, in that their seniority enables them to have this confidence, as they have a greater scope for self-determination over their working hours (Fagan, 2001a), whereas other fathers are more constrained under similar circumstances.

The five men sampled from the Communications Company had some similarities with the Health Trust fathers in that they were aware of their employer's policies on flexible working, but their take-up was not straightforward. Only two of these fathers accessed flexible working provisions (flexitime and homeworking) and in their reflections, it was notable that they felt their particular roles enabled them to utilise them. Furthermore, both felt that they were 'fortunate' to secure their flexibility. The three other Communications Company fathers' accounts of how they did not take up flexible working were intriguing with regards to structure and agency. They emphasised their agency in that they felt that it was their 'choice' not to take up flexible working arrangements. However, their notions of choice did not exist within a vacuum; they were constrained by the need to be present at work because of their managerial responsibilities. This calls into question the adequacy of a recent treatment of the structure-agency dynamic, which is heavy on the agency side – preference theory (Hakim, 2000a). On initial inspection, these

fathers' accounts appear to lend support to the idea that decisions over work and care are guided by our preferences, over whether to be 'work-centred' or 'home-centred'. However, the ways in which these fathers draw upon external factors shows not only how their options are constrained, but concurs with other research findings on how constraints are internalised and presented by social actors as their being their choices (Perrons et. al. 2005). Preference theory does not allow for such a possibility. Thus, structure and agency are both implicated in these managerial fathers' negotiations of their employment practices, which connects back to a central tenet of Structuration Theory: the recursive nature social life (Giddens, 1979). Fathers are able to make choices, but within given structural constraints; in this case, their perceptions of how to fulfil their organisational roles.

The final group of fathers were those employed in the Car Parts Plant. This employer differed from the other three organisations in the study in that they did not have any formal flexible working policies on offer. In this case, the fathers' access to flexibility rested upon their abilities to negotiate with their line manager. Under these circumstances, flexibility was constructed as an occasional 'perk' which restricted the fathers' entitlement to raise these issues more regularly with management, such as when they felt that the early starts of shift times presented issues with childcare. This constrained the fathers' ability to be present at these times to provide care. The other three organisations that fathers were sampled from demonstrate that when there are formal flexible working policies, it cannot be assumed that their implementation is unproblematic. Their implementation is mediated by organisational cultures, fathers' negotiations of how to fulfil the requirements of their posts, the 'management lottery' (Brannen, 2009), and ultimately, how these shape and restrict their 'sense of entitlement' (Lewis, 1997) to policies. In contrast, for the fathers in the Car Parts Plant, the lack of formal policy on flexible working is a legal issue. Their employer is not providing them with their basic legal entitlements, such as the right to request

flexible working (some of these fathers did want to have flexitime). However, it was not possible to find out whether they had implemented the correct length of leave for paternity leave, due to the timings of children's births, which all occurred prior to the introduction of statutory paternity leave. It is notable that fathers lacked awareness of their entitlements (policy provisions can be seen as an element of structure, in that they set down basic entitlements for leaves and flexible working). It also adds a note of caution to assumptions that legal entitlements are embedded in organisational contexts and practices. That these have not filtered down to the Car Parts Plant fathers limits the paid employment practices that they feel able to adopt. The fathers' lack of awareness of their entitlements helps to make sense of some large-scale survey findings from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2004 on high proportions of employees being unsure on what flexible working arrangements were available (Kersley et. al. 2006).

The second strand of the thesis examined how employed fathers negotiate their contribution to childcare, which was influenced by the age of their children. Where fathers had infants and pre-school-aged children, practical caregiving tasks such as bathing and attending to them during the night, were important in their accounts. However, there was some variation in how they reported the nature of their involvement, with some fathers taking a more equal share and others recognising that they were 'helpers' to their partners. In terms of structure and agency, some, but not all of the fathers of infants felt constrained by the way in which they perceived mothers to be more attached to babies. In contrast, the fathers felt that they would develop their relationship with children further as they developed and became more interactive (c.f. Lupton and Barclay, 1997; Lewis, 1986) in activities such as playing.

Playing was an important element of the relationship that fathers had with primary-school aged children, which took place during the weekends, evenings and holiday times. Fathers' felt that

play enabled them to bond with children, and also promoted their developmental needs (c.f. Doucet, 2006). In this light, play can be understood as a form of care. Some of the fathers of primary school-aged children reported that they were involved in the day-to-day routines of getting children ready for school and taking them to childcare. This was particularly the case for the fathers in the public sector, who were able to access flexitime provisions, so that they could start work later. This finding may help to make sense of survey findings that fathers employed in the UK's public sector have a higher weekly mean paternal time with children than fathers in the private sector (Koslowski, 2007). Fathers were also facilitated to provide this care when their partners were absented through paid employment, which resonates with a Swedish survey study where maternal employment was found to positively correlate with paternal involvement (Chuang et. al. 2004). These findings bring in specificities in terms of the enabling and constraining aspects of structure, which is not present in Giddens' more broad-brush approach. In these instances, fathers' accounts point to how their employer having flexible working arrangements, to which they felt entitled to access, and their partners' working commitments aided them in taking a greater role in childcare. This was also the case for the small group of shift parenting fathers, although in these instances, fathers were brought into care by the atypical times of partners' employment, such as working nightshifts. Not all of the shift parenting fathers had access to flexible working arrangements, which shows that a more equal sharing of care can emerge between partners where there is a lack of flexibility over paid working hours.

The fathers of adolescents were a curious group. There were some instances of fathers of children who were approaching their teens feeling that they were growing distant, but the fathers of teenagers had seemingly resolved these issues. These men felt that they had a clear role and that they contributed to adolescents' care, particularly with regards to the relational aspects. These fathers felt enabled to take a role in facilitating their children's independence (c.f. Doucet,

2006; Brandth and Kvande, 1998) by ferrying them to friends' homes or to sporting activities, supervising or helping them with homework, talking with children to instil their values (c.f Cohen, 1993). Returning to the ethics of care, we learn to become autonomous through the care that others provide (Clement, 1996), and fathers feel that they are able to make a clear contribution to this process.

The final research question addressed fathers' negotiations of domestic labour. In addition to providing an overview of the tasks that fathers reported undertaking in their interviews, a series of dynamics with their partners over household chores were described. The fathers reported performing a diverse mix of tasks and a range of dynamics that they felt occurred in their negotiations with partners over the performance of chores. These interpersonal dynamics included: standards for task completion, the ownership of tasks versus 'helping' with them, gratitude for performing tasks, and perceived possessiveness or 'gatekeeping' of tasks (Allen and Hawkins, 1999). To demonstrate the diversity of fathers' reported participation in domestic labour, a five-fold typology was developed, which placed the fathers on a continuum of how they described their involvement. These five groups ranged from: the 'traditional' fathers, fathers who leave domestic tasks to their partners, piecemeal participators, '(relative) sharers', and lone fathers.

As with the research findings on fathers' negotiation of childcare, their participation in domestic labour also appeared to be influenced by their partners' working hours. For instance, the fathers with partners in full-time employment reported taking a greater share of domestic tasks. This finding does not lend qualitative support to Ferri and Smith's (1996) finding that gendered inequalities in the division of domestic chores persist when women work full-time. However, it can make sense of other studies which have found that the more hours women spend in paid

employment, the more likely it is for their partners to take responsibility for household tasks (Geist, 2005; Crompton and Lyonette, 2008). The times of partners' employment also had some impact when partners worked part-time atypical hours, as some fathers shift parented under these circumstances. Both groups of men fell into the group of 'relative sharers'. In contrast, the two fathers with the least reported participation felt that their partners' presence in the home (either because they were not in paid employment or because they had returned to a part-time job after a long period out of the labour market) underpinned their responsibility for their domestic routines. However, in terms of structure and agency, partners' employment did not fully explain all of the fathers' accounts of their performance of household labour, such as the two fathers who largely left domestic tasks to their partners. Although their partners were both in paid employment, these fathers felt that their partners preferred to take on the responsibility for their household chores. In these cases, partners mostly did not negotiate with the fathers to take on a greater share of tasks. This shows that the reported interpersonal dynamics between partners were important. Partners' lack of negotiation with fathers constrained men's participation in chores, whereas in instances in which partners, as social agents, did negotiate, it enabled them to receive 'piecemeal' help, or 'relative sharing'. Therefore, in this study, it was not so straightforward as men avoiding disliked tasks (Edgell, 1980) and holding responsibility for household maintenance (Baxter, 2002). Although such fathers could be found in the sample, there were also those who were involved in domestic routines, and this questions earlier research findings on how women hold responsibility for task completion (Gregory, 1999). The nature of fathers' negotiation of domestic chores in this study was more diverse, with some fathers sharing routines with their partners.

Reflections and Caveats

One caveat that can be made about this study is the issues over the typicality of the four organisations from which the fathers were sampled. This was particularly with regards to the two

private sector employers, as I experienced problems with gaining access to employers that I had approached. It may be that the employers that declined to participate had something to hide with regards to their flexible working practices (or lack of?). However, the four organisations that the fathers were finally sampled from are diverse in terms of their working culture, the types of flexibility on offer, with three employers having formal flexible working policies and leaves available. It should also be noted that within the three large organisations, I was only able to secure access to a limited and small selection of grades. Although having said this, the sample achieved was able to uncover some differences by grade, with some fathers feeling that the nature of their work precluded them from accessing formal flexible working policies.

As regards my choice of methods, I feel that interviewing fathers has provided some rich accounts of their negotiations of flexibility within their organisational cultures, and reported involvement in care and domestic labour. However, with the benefit of hindsight, I would have used some additional and complementary methods in the interviews with fathers about their participation in domestic labour. I found that fathers were very keen to talk about their relationships with children, and the care and activities that they carry out together. The fathers were not so forthcoming when talking about domestic labour. Though I did prompt fathers in the interviews, I felt that I had to prompt them carefully, as I did not want to set up an expectation that they necessarily undertook certain tasks. This is further complicated by the ways in which my gender shaped the interview situations. I now feel that there may have been some scope to utilise visual methods in this section of the interviews. I would have used pictures of men carrying out certain tasks, such as hoovering, cleaning, gardening, and decorating. I could then have asked fathers about how they viewed the men carrying out the tasks, the reasons why they may be doing them, and how they themselves feel about doing that particular task. It may have

been that the use of visual methods furthered discussion, and that they are a relatively non-judgemental way to get fathers to talk more at length about domestic labour.

It must also be noted that the study could not compare the accounts given by fathers with those of their partners. Although fathers' accounts gave insight into their negotiation of childcare and domestic labour, their understandings of enablers and constraints in these areas, and the interpersonal dynamics with their partners, this approach does have its drawbacks. The gaining of their partners' accounts would have been complementary to the data that was gained from the fathers, and would have helped to situate them more firmly in their household contexts, particularly with regard to their negotiations of childcare and domestic labour. It might also have helped in further exploring the findings that emerged from fathers' accounts in terms of exploring structure and agency.

Policy Implications

It follows from the earlier critique of preference theory (Hakim, 2000a) that if policy around fathers' work and care practices is based upon recommendations made upon the basis of individual preference, then it is merely acting at a reactive level. This approach fails to challenge the contextually grounded way in which choices are worked through (c.f. Finch and Mason, 1993). For policy to operate at the level of individual preferences neglects the social, cultural and economic processes which shape fathers' choices. Whilst there is a need to recognise that there is some degree of diversity amongst fathers, and that their differing needs should be taken into account by offering a range of policy options, attention also needs to be paid to the contexts in which these decisions are made. For example, the notion of a career and what it means to fathers would seem to be paramount. The fathers that were pursuing managerial careers were in organisational cultures where they were seemingly 'expected' to work long hours in order to

accomplish tasks. These fathers perceived long hours working as an integral part of their career progression, which relates to previous research findings on the role of organisational discourses of time in constructing long working hours as a marker of an employee's commitment to their career (Lewis, 1997). Related to this, the two men in relatively senior positions described how they had postponed their fatherhood as they felt that the need to be available earlier on in their careers would have restricted their opportunities for involvement with their children. These findings resonate with the findings of a Swedish study where fathers consciously planned to become fathers later in their working lives in response to the constraints they perceived the demands in the start of their careers as placing on fathering (Plantin, 2007). One aspect of building a contextually-sensitive approach to policy on work and care practices will necessitate a critical examination of the contemporary construction of careers.

The critical policy issue raised by the case study of the Car Parts Plant fathers is that where there are legal entitlements that have been implemented with regards to flexible working and leaves for care purposes, it does not follow that they are implemented at a local, organisational level, nor that fathers themselves are necessarily aware of them. Therefore, there is a need to work with employers to ensure that legislative measures are operationalised in organisational cultures. This would also involve raising fathers' awareness of their legal entitlements, so that they do not have to rely upon working for employers who implement flexible working practices, or being employed in a role that is seen as conducive to flexible working, or having an employer with informally supportive line management. This is further complicated by the issue of fathers' sense of 'subjective entitlement' (Lewis, 1997) seriously to consider and take up their provisions.

In terms of care, the fathers of infants' felt that fatherhood was 'learnt', which contrasted with their understandings of motherhood as being more biologically-based, particularly with regards

to their capacity to nurture infants. A 'father-sensitive' (Collier and Sheldon, 2008) policy approach would help fathers' confidence to 'learn' caring skills and given that they feel that fathering is socially-based, fathers may be receptive to this approach. Focusing support at mothers may serve merely to reinforce gendered assumptions about caring responsibilities. Although the issue of paternity leave is beyond the scope of this study, some tentative insights can be drawn. Improved paternity leave provisions, provided that they are embedded in organisational cultures and practices, and that fathers have a solid awareness of them, would perhaps be more successful in bringing fathers into the home to provide care. This is provided that the income replacement levels of the leave are regarded as sufficient. It would also help in instances where fathers are reluctant to 'burden' their employer by taking paternity leave (Thompson et. al. 2005), to help overcome a lack of entitlement to paternity leave.

However, leave provisions should not be focused upon the early years of parenthood alone. The late childhood and adolescent years are seen by fathers as an important time by fathers to have an involvement in children's lives. Here, fathering entailed promoting positive values to children, liasing with their child's school to ensure their academic progress, helping to facilitate the completion of homework, and aiding exam revision. In line with these aspects of fathering practices, it may be appropriate to give consideration to extending the period for which parental leave can be taken. Taking a broader policy approach to fathers' care as children develop would seem to place this care on a stronger footing.

Turning to fathers' negotiations of domestic labour, it may initially appear as if divisions of labour in the home are difficult for policy to address. This is based upon a view of the activities of households and families as occurring within an isolated and decontextualised 'black box'. Domestic labour does not occur within a socio-cultural vacuum, as seen in Glucksmann's (2000)

'total social organisation of labour' framework. There is a need to argue against the trivialisation of housework, and to place what may be perceived as a 'private' issue firmly into the public domain and to engage in meaningful debate. This stands in contrast to the issue of care which has a relatively firmer footing on the policy agenda. Policies impact upon the private sphere, particularly in light of their gendered assumptions regarding roles and responsibilities. Government policy that reinforces the one-and-a-half earner household arrangement would seem to be influencing this behaviour with respect to the undertaking of domestic tasks. These policies help to create a context in which these gendered negotiations in the home take place. These assumptions impacted upon the ways in which the fathers 'worked through' their roles in their households. For example, fathers' absence through their engagement in full-time employment provides them with an opportunity to be distant from the home, its everyday running and the knowledge of exactly what everyday household chores entail.

Future Research

With regards to research on organisations and fathers' work/life practices, it would be worthwhile to have some more research undertaken on fathers' awareness of their legal entitlements with regards to flexible working practices and leave entitlements. This study, with a relatively small sample of fathers, has found a lack of awareness of these legal entitlements, but it can be questioned how typical this is. Further research could help to more firmly establish fathers' awareness and whether there is a large-scale lack of awareness of paternity leave entitlements, and the right to request flexible working. Within this agenda, it would be interesting to know more about the negotiation, which fathers carry out with themselves, as to what is a reasonable amount of flexibility to have whilst fulfilling their organisational obligations. This research could explore the ways in which fathers' legal entitlements filter down

into organisational contexts, and the ways in which these are negotiated by fathers which enable and constrain their subjective sense of entitlement to access these provisions.

With regards to fathers and care, there are relatively few studies on fathers' involvement with older children. Our understanding of father involvement clearly needs to expand beyond what fathers do during the early years of childhood. In this study, fathers' help with children's homework was identified as a promising area for future research. This would correspond with current policy approaches that seek to facilitate parental involvement in education.

Turning to domestic labour, the normative and interpersonal negotiations that occur in households have been well documented in previous research. The linkages between households and the wider economy are also well established. However, further research is required that considers the issue of policy supports to foster more equitable divisions of domestic labour. There is also a need to assert the importance of domestic labour as a legitimate area of policy concern and for policy intervention – researchers could contribute to this process. Another interesting avenue for research on domestic labour would be to explore the ways in which gender impacts upon the resulting interview responses. This has struck me as a curious aspect of my data, but also relates more broadly to methodological concerns with interviewing and the effects of interviewer characteristics.

Appendix One: School Research Ethics Committee Submission

Cardiff School of Religious & Theological Studies

Cardiff School of Social Sciences

Ethical Approval Form

Staff, MPhil/PhD, Professional Doctorate & Integrated PhD Research Projects

Must be submitted at the latest by midday on the Friday preceding the meeting of the School Board at which you wish the application to be considered to: Dr. Will Johnson, School Research Ethics Officer, RELIG, or to the School Office, f.a.o. Dr. Johnson.

PLEASE NOTE BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION:

1. **Illegible handwritten applications will not be processed so please type if necessary**

2. **Do not submit an application to the SREC if your research is with the NHS or NHS - linked – refer instead to NHS Local Research Ethics Committee**

3. **You should not submit an application to the SREC if your research involves adults who do not have capacity to consent. Such projects have to be submitted to the NRES system.**

4. **Staff undertaking minor projects as part of a course of study (e.g. PCUTL) do not need SREC approval unless the project involves sensitive issues. This exemption does not apply to Masters dissertations or Doctoral research.**

5. **APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS: Please attach the following, without which your application decision will be delayed:**
   - **Full project proposal**
   - **Participant information form and Consent form (if available)**
   - **Details concerning external funding (if applicable)**

6. **The School Research Ethics web pages can be accessed via: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchethics/index.html**

   And should be read in conjunction with: http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchethics/index.html

7. **Information on data management, collecting personal data: data protection act requirements, can be accessed via: http://www.cf.ac.uk/cocom/index.html**

8. **Information on Research Ethics (including Ethical Issues in Research – informed consent etc.) can be accessed via the University's Research and Commercial Division web pages via the "Research Ethics" link on: http://www.cf.ac.uk/racdv/index.html**

9. **Information on the University's Health and Safety Procedures can be accessed at: http://www.cf.ac.uk/osheu/index.html**

Title of Project: Fathers' Approaches to Work/life Balance

Name of researcher~~(s)~~: Victoria Seddon **Application Date:** June, 2005

Signature of lead researcher:

~~**Staff project** *(delete as appropriate)*~~ **Student project** *(delete as appropriate)*

Project Start Date: September, 2004 **Student No.** 001050488

Project End Date: September, 2008 **Email Address:** SeddonVA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Supervisor(s): Prof. Teresa Rees

Recruitment Procedures

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Does your project include children under 16 years of age?		X	
2	Does your project include people with learning or communication difficulties?		X	
3	Does your project include people in custody?		X	
4	Is your project likely to include people involved in illegal activities?		X	
5	Does your project involve people belonging to a vulnerable group, other than those listed above?		X	
6	Does your project include people who are, or are likely to become your clients or clients of the department in which you work?		X	
7	Does your project include people for whom English / Welsh is not their first language?		X	

Consent Procedures

		Yes	No	N/A
8	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	X		
9	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	X		
10	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?			X
11	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reasons?	X		
12	Will you give potential participants a significant period of time to consider participation?	X		

Possible Harm to Participants

		Yes	No	N/A
13	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?		X	
14	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing a detriment to their interests as a result of participation?		X	

If there are any risks to the participants you must explain in your proposal how you intend to minimise these risks

Data Protection

		Yes	No	N/A
15	Will any non-anonymised and/or personalised data be generated and/or stored?		X	
16	Will you have access to documents containing sensitive[32] data about living individuals?		X	
	If "Yes" will you gain the consent of the individuals concerned?			

If there are any other potential ethical issues that you think the Committee should consider please explain them on a separate sheet. It is your obligation to bring to the attention of the Committee any ethical issues not covered on this form.

[32] Sensitive data are *inter alia* data that relates to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, physical or mental health, sexual life, actual and alleged offences.

Research Proposal

b) Please provide a brief statement of the aims and objectives of the PhD, details of why the research is appropriate and a timetable for the programme of work. You should summaries the hypotheses or questions to be used and the research methods you intend to use. Your response to this question must not exceed two pages.

The study aims to provide the depth of understanding that can be gained from qualitative research. Theoretical insights of Socialist feminism will be utilised, as it has demonstrated an early concern with work/life balance and gendered experiences of it. This PhD intends to generate knowledge that can broadly inform policy-debates surrounding work/life balance. It will also contribute to the body of research and theory that exists on employment, and to the growing academic area of interest in work/life balance issues.

Within the context of the UK, work/life balance has become a vast social issue. Currently, 3.75 million employees in the UK are regularly working in excess of 48 hours a week (TUC, 2004). However, both policy and research concerning work/life balance have had a tendency to focus on mothers, so that, as a consequence, there has been a neglect of men's fathering roles (EOC, 2003). It has been pointed out that New Labour's policies in this area have experienced difficulties partly due to their lack of gendered analysis (Rake, 2002). Furthermore, the diversity of caring contexts in contemporary society has been overlooked by policy makers (Williams, 2004), and so further research is needed so that work/life balance policies cater for such diversity.

Timetable:

- October 2004-January 2005: reading for literature review and writing of early draft
- February 2005-March 2005: prepare pilot interview schedules and gain access.
- April 2005-May 2005: carry out pilot study
- May 2005-August 2005: analyse data from the pilot study (although some analysis will also be ongoing throughout the data collection to look for emerging themes, and to develop them further in the interview schedule)
- September 2005-October 2005: refine the interview schedule
- October 2005-November 2005: gain access for research
- December 2005: catching up on new literature on work/life balance
- January 2006-April 2006: main research
- April 2006-August 2006: final analysis (some will already have been carried out during the main research period)
- September 2006: review of new literature
- October 2006-March 2007: preparation of thesis
- April 2007: final review of new literature
- May 2007-August 2007: final preparation of the thesis.

Throughout the PhD, a research diary will be kept, which will feed into new ideas, and help with preparation for the viva, as key decisions and reflections upon the research will be recorded.

As this is a qualitative study, a range of 'foreshadowed ideas' will be explored in the research:

- gendered analysis
- social class experiences/or business sectors
- focus on childcare/parenting.

The study will utilise the insights that feminist research practice provides. The principle method of collection will be semi-structured interviews. Tape-recorded. Transcription. CAQDAS used to aid

the data analysis as a large volume of data will be generated, so these applications are useful as a data management tool (Fielding, 2001).

References

Equal Opportunities Commission (2003) *Fathers: balancing work and family* [WWW] <http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseg/research/fathers%20balancing%20work%20and%20family%20(english).pdf> [Accessed 8.10.2004].

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Trade Union Congress (2004) *Changes to Work Time Rules Satisfy No One* [WWW] <http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-8677-FO.cfm> [Accessed 8.10.2004].

Williams, F. (2004) *Rethinking Families* London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

c) If your planned programme of work differs to that proposed in your original application please provide full details to explain how the programme has changed and why. It is important that you answer this fully as the ESRC will, in cases where there have been significant changes which are not explained to our satisfaction consider withdrawing the studentship award. Please use up to one page for your response.

d) If you intend to undertake any period of fieldwork overseas please detail what this will entail, how it will contribute to your programme of work and where it will fit into the timetable. Please detail which countries you intend to visit and the duration of the visit(s). Your response to this question must not exceed half a page.

e) Are there any particular ethical considerations that arise out of the design and/or conduct to the proposed programme of work? If so please explain these issues and how you intend to ensure your work will comply with the highest ethical standards. Your response to this question must not exceed half a page.

The research design is informed by feminist research literature, this serves to provide a strong awareness of the ethical difficulties of utilising 'private' knowledge in the 'public' world (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998) of academia and policy-making circles. The ethical codes of the British Sociological Association (1994) can aid the researcher in addressing such dilemmas, as they stimulate the researcher's reflections in such situations. Broader ethical issues surround privacy, consent, confidentiality, deceit and deception. Harm to participants should be avoided at all stages of the research, not merely the data collection, but in the analysis and in any texts that are published from the research (Olesen, 2000). Semi-structured interviews as a research method, pose some strong ethical considerations. Informed consent is a guiding principle, and should be sought of all respondents, along with an awareness of the problematical nature of informed consent (Fine et al. 2000). As the data gained from the interviews will be transcribed and analysed with CAQDAS, it is essential that storage of the data is compliant with the Data Protection Act. As the research contains

some applications to policy-relevant debates, a need may arise for the researcher to 'stay with' the findings of the study for some time after the end of the research to prevent its misinterpretation (Finch, 1986).

References

British Sociological Association (1994) *Statement of Ethical Practice* [WWW] <URL: http://www.britsoc.org.uk/about/ethic.htm> [Accessed 10.10.2003].

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Olesen, V. (2000) Feminisms and qualitative research at and into the millennium, in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 215-255.

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This research is funded by an ESRC 1+3 studentship.

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

RESEARCH ETHICS MONITORING

You are the lead researcher on a project that is registered with the SOCSI School Research Ethics Committee as still ongoing.

Please answer the questions below.

SREC reference number: **SREC/2**

Title of project: **Men's perspectives on work life balance**

Lead researcher: **Victoria Seddon, SOCSI**

1. Is the project still ongoing: Yes / No

   If No

   Why was the project ended?

   Will the project result in any publication or other research output (please specify)?

   If Yes

   Have any changes been made to the approved project plan? No changes

   If Yes

   Have these changes been communicated to the SREC?

   Please describe the changes:

   Please describe the reason(s) for these changes:

2. Have any ethical issues arisen during the project that were not noted at the time of the application, and which you would now wish to declare ? No additional ethical issues

Please return this form to Deborah Watkins, Research and Graduate Studies Administrator (WatkinsD2@cardiff.ac.uk / Extension: 75091 / Room 0.10 Glamorgan Building) by 31st October 2006

**An electronic version of this form is available from Deborah Watkins **
(contact details above)

Appendix Two: Communications with Respondents

Participant Information Letter/Email

School of Social Sciences
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3WT
(date)

(Workplace Address)

Dear (name)

I am an Economic and Social Research Council sponsored PhD student in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. It has suggested that I contact you as a potential participant in some research that I am undertaking for my PhD in sociology. My thesis explores fathers' perspectives on work/life balance.

For this research, I will be carrying out interviews with fathers such as yourself. The interview would last half an hour to an hour at the most. The interview would be kept strictly confidential, so it would not be shared with your employer.

You are perfectly free to choose not to participate in this research. If there are any questions or concerns that you have about the research please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Seddon.

<SeddonVA@cardiff.ac.uk>

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. However, before the interview, I would like to explain the uses that the interview data may be put to. The interview, if you consent to it being recorded, will be transcribed and kept anonymous by using a pseudonym. The only people who will have access to the interview transcript will be my supervisor, Prof. Teresa Rees and myself. Anonymised excerpts from the transcript may be included in the PhD thesis and in any resulting publications such as articles in academic journals, as well as conference presentations. You are most welcome at any point to ask me any questions about my research. You do not have to answer any question that you would prefer not to, and if at any time you feel uncomfortable with participating in the research you are free to withdraw your consent. A full copy of the interview transcript can be requested should you wish to look over it, make amendments or withdraw certain information from the research.

Could you sign here to say that you have agreed to the above?.....

If you consent to the interview being tape-recorded, please could you sign here?.....

Would you like a copy of the interview transcript sent to you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Once again, I would like to thank you for taking this time to let me interview you; it is very much appreciated,

Victoria Seddon

Cardiff University School of Social Sciences
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3WT

Email: SeddonVA@Cardiff.ac.uk
Phone:

Appendix Three: Interview Schedule

Interviewee Details

Hours worked per week:

How long have you worked here:

Previous Employment Held:

Do you have a partner? Does partner work? Partner's Current Job Title:

Hours per week worked by partner:

Number of Children:

Age/s of Child/ren:

Main Interview Schedule

NS-SEC

Q1 – Industry Description

"What does the firm/organisation you work for mainly make or do?"
Describe fully- Probe MANUFACTURING or PROCESSING or DISTRIBUTING etc. AND MAIN GOODS PRODUCED, MATERIALS USED, WHOLESALE or RETAIL etc.

Q2 – Occupation title of current main job

"What is your job title?"

Q3 – Occupation description of current job

"What do you mainly do in your job?"
CHECK SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING NEEDED TO DO THE JOB. Any other qualifications.

Q4 – Employee or self-employed

"Are you working as an employee or are you self employed?"

1. Employee Go to Q5
2. Self-employed Go to Q7

Q5 – Supervisory status

"In your job, do you have any formal responsibility for supervising the work of other employees?"

1. Yes Go to Q6
2. No Go to Q6

Q6 – Number of Employees (Employees)
"How many people work for your employer at the place where you work?
Are there... (RUNNING PROMPT)...

1. 1 to 24,
2. 25 to 499, or
3. 500 or more employees"

NB. Size of local unit of the establishment where respondent works, where job is mainly carried out e.g. single building, part of building, or self-contained group of buildings.
Total number of employees at respondent's workplace, not just number within particular section/department they work.

Q7 – Self-employed working on own or with employees

"Are you working on your own or do you have employees?"

1. On own/with partner(s) but no employees
2. With employees Go to Q8

Q8 – Number of employees (self-employed)
"How many people do you employ at the place where you work?
Were there… (RUNNING PROMPT)…

1. 1 to 24
2. 25 to 499
3. 500 or more employees?"

Workplace

Taken leave for childcare?

- Type of leave? Parental? Paternity? Annual leave? Etc.
- When?
- How long for?
- Variations between first and second/ third child in leave taken and how long for?
- Have variations in leave affected relationship with each child? Child with shorter leave? Longer leave?
- Was the leave beneficial? Why?
- Any improvements to the leave? Longer? Level of payment?

Does your employer have family-friendly policies?

- Did you have to negotiate as an individual? Did you use a trade union?
- Has employer ever not been helpful?
- How could employer have been more supportive?

General workplace and colleagues, were they supportive of you taking leave?

- General attitude towards working hours?
- Rigid and set in stone? Time made up for later if needed? Work taken home?
- Are you aware of any policies in workplace to help parents with childcare? Who are they aimed at? Men? Women? Both?
- Has anyone e.g. a colleague ever been discouraging of taking time off for childcare?

Do you feel your experiences of fathering and working life are fairly typical for most men?

- Why?
- Could other men be different?
- How about fathers in professional/managerial work/fathers lower down the organisation?

Household Work:

Tell me about the jobs around the house that you do?

- How often?
- Sorts of tasks? DIY? Gardening? Car? Tax returns?
- Rough amount of time?
- Any times/circumstances when you've undertaken more/less jobs around home?

How do you feel amount of jobs around the house that you do?

-Why

- What enables you to undertake household tasks? / What doesn't help?
- What would enable you to do more household jobs?

What jobs around the home does your partner do?

- How much time do you think they spend on household tasks? Average day? Average week?
- How does this make you feel?
- Should your partner do more jobs around the home, or less?
- Partner's opinion on the jobs around the house that you do?

Childcare:

<u>In a typical day, how would you describe your level of involvement in doing things for the children?</u>

- Average week, what sorts of things do you do for the children? Typical tasks?
- Any variation between weekdays and the weekend?
- Any times when you've done things for the children? Times when you've done less?
- How do you feel about your role/involvement in doing things for the children?
- And the type of relationship this allows you to have with your child?
- Anything that could be brought in to help you? Govt pol? Employer? Payments?

<u>Has your involvement in doing things for the children ever varied e.g. with child's age?</u>

- What sorts of tasks did you do earlier on in child's life?
- When they're a toddler? nursery school age? At school?
- How do you feel about your relationship with your children? Has this varied with their age? Between first and second/third child?

<u>Typically, what sorts of things does your partner do for the children? Average day?</u>

- Average week?
- Any variations?
- How does partner feel about the things they do for the children? Things that you do?
- Is partner's employer supportive of their involvement with childcare?
- Do they have any routines with work and childcare? Do you share the routines?
- Does partner feel there could be more done to support them? Something government could bring in? Employer? Government? Yourself?
- Do you have any suggestions?
- Who takes time off if the child/ren are sick? Why? What happens during half- term?

Do you have any outside help with the childcare? E.g. Nursery, crèche, babysitter? Family? Friends? Breakfast at school?

- How does this help?
- Any drawbacks? Is it difficult? Does it just work out? Easier with 1 child or two?
- What improvements could be made? Service? Help with payment?
- Have you ever used other help with childcare in the past? Why stopped? Is current arrangement better/worse? How could it have been improved? Benefits?
- Any childcare you would consider using in the future? If it became available? Ideally, if you had a free choice, what childcare help would you use?
- Are there any childcare services that you would definitely not use?
- How could the government support childcare services, in a way that would benefit you? Anything employers could do? Is there more that could be done?
-

Is it becoming easier for fathers? Is it improving?

Anything else that you would like to add? That I haven't given you the opportunity to discuss?

Appendix Four: Research Access Letter

(Respondent's address)

24th February 2006

Dear (Name)

I am a PhD student in the School of Social Sciences, and am currently funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. My PhD is being supervised by Professor Teresa Rees CBE, and it explores men's approaches to work/life balance. I am sure you can appreciate that this is a piece of highly policy-relevant research.

I wondered whether you would be able to help provide me with access to a sample of ten fathers of young children who currently work in your Cardiff office for me to interview for my main study. Any help that you would be able to give me with this would be very much appreciated.

I will contact you over the next few days to see if this would be viable and to answer any questions that you may have about my research. In the meantime, if you should have any questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Seddon

Email: SeddonVA@Cardiff.ac.uk
Tel:

Appendix Five: Sample Details

Father's Name	Occupation	Employer	Weekly working hours	Paternity leave arrangements	Father-child relationship	Age and gender of child/ren	Partner's working hours	Partner's Occupation
George	Human Resources Officer	Local authority	37, with flexitime	1 week paid paternity leave with last child	Lone father of two sons for 9 years, now a repartnered resident father	Two sons aged 23 and 20 and a daughter aged 6	37	Government body manager
Andrew	Principle Research Officer	Local authority	37	1 day	Partnered resident father	Two daughters aged 11 and 9	N/a – partner not currently in paid employment	N/a – partner not currently in paid employment
Ian	Economic Strategy Officer	Local authority	37, with flexitime	N/a	Resident step father	One step-daughter aged 7	37	IT Systems Trainer
Robert	Communications Officer	Local authority	37, works 40 with flexitime	1 week unpaid paternity leave and one week annual leave	Partnered resident father	One daughter aged 15 and a son aged 18 months	30	University lecturer
Daniel	Systems Development Assistant	Local authority	37, with flexitime	2 weeks using unpaid paternity leave and special leave	Partnered resident father	Two daughters aged 3 years and 6 months	Worked 15 hours and returning after maternity leave	Local government worker
Phillip	Senior Human Resources Advisor	Health Trust	40-45	Unknown	Partnered resident father	One son aged 7 and a daughter aged 5	Unknown	Student nurse

Jonathan	Consultant	Health Trust	48, sometimes 55	1 week paternity leave for first child, may have taken two weeks paid paternity leave for second child	Partnered resident father	Two daughters aged 6 and 2	19	Doctor
Alan	Senior Human Resources Advisor	Health Trust	45	Unsure of length of leaves, used annual leave	Partnered resident father	Two daughters aged 16 and 14	18.5	Administrative assistant
Adam	Senior Staff Nurse and Practice Educator	Health Trust	40	Unknown	Partnered resident father	Two children aged 3 years and 18 months	18.5	Staff Nurse
Mark	Assistant Directorate Accountant	Health Trust	37	2 weeks, paid leave (adoptive)	Partnered resident adoptive father	One daughter aged 6	30-37	Payroll officer (same employer)
Chris	Marketing Manager	Communications Company	42 (includes lunchbreaks), can homework	2 weeks using annual leave	Partnered resident father	One son aged 12 and a daughter aged 9	27	Trainee Accountant
Matthew	Business Manager	Communications Company	42 (includes lunchbreaks), with flexitime	1 week paid special leave (at manager's discretion) and one week annual leave	Partnered resident father	One daughter aged 19 and two sons aged 14 and 16	15-20, termtime only	Teacher
Tom	Call Centre Manager	Communications Company	40-42	N/a	Resident step father	Three aged 21, 19 and 16	30-40	Union Representative
Richard	Business Centre Sales Manager	Communications Company	50	1 week paid special leave for first child, two weeks paid paternity leave and two weeks paid leave for second child	Partnered resident father	One son aged 11 and a daughter aged 2	27	Staff nurse

Duncan	Team Manager	Communications Company	42	2 weeks annual leave	Partnered resident father	One son aged 17 and a daughter aged 13	30, term time only	Local authority education project officer
Greg	Board Manufacturer	Car Parts Plant	37, occasional Saturday morning overtime	2 weeks unpaid leave for last child, no leave taken around birth of other two children	Partnered resident father	Three girls aged 12, 5 years, and 17 months	20	Pharmacy assistant
Harry	Senior Electrical Distribution System Technician	Car Parts Plant	37	3 days entitlement and 12 days annual leave	Lone father, currently 'living apart together' with girlfriend	One daughter aged 14 and a son aged 11	Girlfriend currently not in paid work	n/a
Steve	Design Engineer	Car Parts Plant	50	3 days entitlement	Partnered resident father	Three aged 20, 17 and 3	24	Hairdresser
Stuart	Electrical Distribution System Engineer	Car Parts Plant	37	3 days paid entitlement and 2 days annual leave	Partnered resident father	One daughter aged 11 months	37	Engineering Assistant
David	Senior Development Engineer	Car Parts Plant	Contracted for 37 but substantially over	3 days entitlement	Divorced lone father, youngest child resident	Two daughters aged 18 and 14	N/a – lone father	N/a – lone father
Colin	Works Team Leader	Car Parts Plant	37	Father unsure – a week?	Partnered resident father	One son aged 9	37	Trainer

Bill	Harness Manufacturing Services Manager	Car Parts Plant	Contracted for 37 but works 60 hours when working overseas	3 days entitlement	Partnered resident father	Two sons aged 17 and 15	Contracted for 37 but works for 42, occasionally 50 hours	Social Services Manager
Paul	Senior ADO Engineer	Car Parts Plant	Contracted for 39, normally works 45 hours with overtime	1 week for both children	Partnered resident father	One son aged 9 and a daughter aged 8	16	Home Carer
Joe	Electrical Distribution System Engineer	Car Parts Plant	37	3 days entitlement	Partnered resident father	One son aged 6	30	Local government officer

Appendix Six: Tables on Fathers and Childcare

Table 6.1: Fathers of Infants and Preschool Children's Care by Employer

Fathers' Employers'	Playing	Feeding	Bathing	Putting to Bed	Waking	Nightime Care	Weekends	Annual Leave	Withdrawal	Taking to Childcare	Collecting from Childcare
Council (2)	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Health Trust (2)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Communications (1)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Plant (3)	3	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
Total (8)	**6**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**

Table 6.2: Fathers of Infants and Preschool Children's Care by Partners' Employment

Fathers' Partners' Employment Status	Playing	Feeding	Bathing	Putting to Bed	Waking	Nightime Care	Weekends	Annual Leave	Withdrawal	Taking to Childcare	Collecting from Childcare
Not in Paid Employment (1)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Part-time (4)	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	1
Reduced Hours (2)	1	1	2	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1
Full-time (1)	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total (8)	**6**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**

Table 6.3: Fathers of Primary School-aged Children (5-11) years Childcare by Employer

Fathers' Employers	Playing	Bathing	Putting to Bed	Nightime Care	Ready for School	Taking to School	Taking to Childcare	Collecting from School	Collecting from Childcare	Ferrying to Activities	Ferrying to Friends	Outside Leisure Together
Council (3)	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	2
Health (3)	1	2	3	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	2
Communications (2)	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
Plant (4)	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	2	0	3
Total (12)	**8**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**1**	**8**

Table 6.4: Fathers of Primary School-aged Children (5-11 years) Childcare by Partners' Employment

Partners' Paid Employment Status	Playing	Bathing	Putting to Bed	Nightime Care	Ready for School	Taking to School	Taking to Childcare	Collecting from School	Collecting from Childcare	Ferrying to Activities	Ferrying to Friends	Outside Leisure Together
Not in Paid Employment (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Student (1)	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Part-time (3)	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2
Reduced Hours (4)	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	1	3
Full-time (3)	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	1
Total (12)	**8**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**1**	**8**

Table 6.5: Fathers of 12-18 year olds Care by Employer

Fathers' Employer	Ferrying to Activities	Ferrying to Friends	Outside Leisure Together	Homework	Instilling Values	Providing Guidance	Keeping on Track	Independence	Teens' Social Lives	Less Involvement
Council (1)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Health (1)	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Communications (4)	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	0	3
Plant (5)	4	0	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	0
Total (11)	**7**	**4**	**6**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**3**	**5**

Table 6.6: Fathers of 12-18 year olds' care by partners' employment

Partners' Paid Employment Status	Ferrying to Activities	Ferrying to Friends	Outside Leisure Together	Homework	Instilling Values	Providing Guidance	Keeping on Track	Independence	Teens' Social Lives	Less Involvement
Part-time (4)	3	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	2
Reduced Hours (4)	2	2	3	0	0	0	1	2	1	3
Full-time (1)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Total (9)	**6**	**4**	**6**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**2**	**5**

Table 6.7: Fathers of Infants and Pre-School Children's Activities with Children

Father	**Age of Children Under 10**	**Fathers' Activities**
Daniel	Daughters 6 months and 3	Family visits, visits
Robert	18 months	Meals out together, swimming, walking, visits
Jonathan	Daughters, 2 (and 6)	Family visits
Adam	18 months and 3	Going to the park, visits
Richard	Daughter, 2	Dog walking, walks, play football together, swimming, visits (aquarium, boat rides, beach)
Greg	Daughters, 17 months (12 and 5)	Visits
Steve	3	Play in the garden, cycling, play in the park, visit a play centre
Stuart	Daughter, 11 months	Playing together

Table 6.8: Fathers' of Primary School-aged Children's (5-11 years) Activities

Father	Age of Children	Activities
George	Daughter, 6	Cinema together, attend a local carnival,
Andrew	Daughters, 11 and 9	Ferry from afterschool dance club, attend Asperger's Support Group, cinema together, bowling
Ian	Step-daughter, 7	Family visits, cinema together, taking daughter and her friends out/supervising their play
Phillip	Son, 7 and Daughter 5	Playing, family visits
Jonathan	Daughters, 6 (and 2)	Family visits
Mark	Daughter, 6	Swimming, shopping together
Chris	Daughter, 9 (Son, 12)	Ferrying to friends' homes, swimming, playing board games
Richard	Son, 11 (Daughter, 2)	Taking his children out, dog walking, walks, play football together, swimming, visits as a family (aquarium, boat rides, beach)
Greg	Daughters 5 (17 months and 12)	Swimming lessons, ferry to maths tutor, go fishing together
Colin	Son, 9	Play games together, play sports in the garden, walking, family visits, ferry to piano lessons
Paul	Son, 9 and Daughter, 8	Caravanning, walks, swimming, cycling, play board games; ferrying to: educational support club, library, first aid club, football club, friends' homes,
Joe	Son, 6	Playing, swimming

Table 6.9: Fathers' of Secondary School-aged Children and Adolescents (12-18 years) Activities

Father	Ages of Children 12 and Over	Activities
Robert	Daughter, 15 (son, 18 mths)	Swimming, Ferrying to friends' homes
Alan	Daughters, 16 and 14	Ferrying to friends' homes
Chris	Son, 12 (daughter, 9)	Ferrying to friends' homes, swimming, playing board games
Matthew	Daughter, 19 and Sons, 14 and 16	Ferrying to sports activities, maintenance projects together
Tom	21, 19 and 16	'Go out together'
Duncan	Son, 17 and Daughter, 13	Watching son's football, swimming, take daughter to piano lessons, meals out, sports in the garden, board games
Greg	Daughter, 12 (and 5 and 17 mths)	Swimming lessons, ferry to maths tutor, go fishing together
Harry	Daughter, 14 (son, 11)	Weekends as a 'fun' time, board games - scrabble
David	Daughters, 18 and 14	Ferry daughter to cinema, ferrying daughter and friends
Bill	Sons, 17 and 15	Watching sons' play rugby

Appendix Seven: Fathers' Domestic Labour Tables

Table 7.1: Fathers' Domestic Tasks by Their Employer

Domestic Task	**Local Authority (5)**	**Health Trust (5)**	**Communications Company (5)**	**Car Parts Plant (9)**	**Total (24)**
Ironing	2	1	4	1	**8**
Cleaning	4	4	2	5	**15**
Preparing Breakfast	0	2	2	2	**6**
Cooking	3	3	2	3	**11**
Clothes Washing	2	3	4	3	**12**
Hoovering	1	2	2	4	**9**
Shopping	2	2	2	3	**9**
Washing Up/Drying Up/Loading/Unloading Dishwasher	3	4	3	6	**16**
DIY	2	1	1	3	**7**
Maintenance	2	4	2	5	**13**
Gardening	2	4	5	5	**16**
Total	**23**	**30**	**29**	**40**	**113**

Table 7.2: Fathers' Domestic Tasks by Partners' Hours of Employment

Domestic Task	**Not Employed (2)**	**Student (1)**	**Part-time (7)**	**Reduced Hours (7)**	**Full-time (5)**	**Total (22)**
Ironing	0	0	0	5	2	**7**
Cleaning	1	0	5	3	4	**13**
Preparing Breakfast	0	0	2	2	1	**5**
Cooking	1	0	3	4	2	**10**
Shopping	0	1	2	2	2	**7**
Clothes Washing	0	0	5	5	2	**12**
Hoovering	0	1	4	2	2	**9**
Washing Up/Drying Up/Loading/Unloading Dishwasher	1	1	5	5	3	**15**
DIY	1	0	1	2	2	**6**
Maintenance	1	1	5	3	2	**12**
Gardening	1	1	4	6	3	**15**
Total	**6**	**5**	**36**	**39**	**25**	**104**

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